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AN IRISH SPORT ABROAD.



An Irish Sport Abroad;

OR,

Pat Mulloney's Adventures.

BY C. L. EDWARDS.

CHAPTER I.

FOOTSTEPS.

TOWARD the close of an autumn day, in the year 1844, two men were picking their way through a tangled copse of cottonwood, in the region contiguous to the head-waters of the Yellowstone. The foremost was tall, and dressed in the garb of a hunter. His gray locks were gathered up underneath a rude bearskin cap, ornamented with a feather from the red-bird's wing. His face was seamed with care rather than with age; his forehead was broad and full; his eyes were quick with expression. In his left hand he carried a double-barreled rifle, while suspended by a leathern thong across his back, and under his left arm, hung a powder-flask, kept in place by a similar strap passing over the other shoulder, and meeting on the right side, at the ends of which hung a leathern bag, containing his shot and other "nick-nacks" belonging to his profession.

The person following closely in his steps was short, fat, and red-headed. His rifle was strapped across his back, and in his belt a long knife was exposed, ready for instant use. It was astonishing with what ease this disproportioned individual followed the more nervous strides of his taller companion.

The twain journeyed on till they neared a little stream, when the foremost hunter, carefully reconnoitering, advanced.

"Hist! Bogard," he at length spoke, almost in a whisper.

The soft earth was trampled with horses' hoofs and men's feet.

"There, Bogard, are the marks the Sioux leave, and, if these eyes of mine be not failing, this day's sun is the first that has shone upon them."

"Well, I guess that's my opinion, too," drawled the fat individual. Then he added, with an expression of surprise, his round little eyes twinkling. "*Voilà, mon compagnon!* us the Frenchers say. As sure as I'm the respectable son of Pennsylvania parents, thar's been a white man in the muss!"

The hunter again carefully inspected the ground.

"Ay, Bogard," he answered, "those little eyes of yours were quicker than mine for once; though the time was when few could see sharper. There's been a sharp scrimmage, and we must scent the trail."

Down the course of the little stream they started. For some time they kept on, till the roar of waters proclaimed their approach to a larger stream. In a few moments they descended into a ravine, that led to the water's edge. The creek was wide, and rolled with aullen roar. Here the trail was lost.

Both banks were lined with cottonwood. As they neared the creek, the hunter again gave

his warning "hist!" to Bogard, and, dropping on his knees, he glided into a clump of underbrush.

Scanning the opposite shore, he discovered the Indians about a hundred rods below near a fire, preparing their supper. It was plain that they were a war-party; for their fierce countenances were begrimed and streaked with paint. Their horses were near at hand, cropping the long grass. The hunter was interrupted by an exclamation from Bogard:

"Thar's our man, fast as a young bear in a steel-trap."

"As true as day," replied the elder; "and as I expected."

A white man was clearly to be seen, pinioned to a tree near the circle of savages.

The sun had set, and the softer twilight now succeeded.

"Bogard," said the hunter, "we must cross this creek; we have no boat, and to swim it is impracticable; therefore, we must think of another plan. D'ye see yon tall tree above us," he continued, "how its great limbs twine about its neighbor on the opposite shore? You see it? Then follow me."

"Drive on, colonel, I'm yer man fur any thing; from a bear's hug to a pow-wow."

In a few moments they reached the cottonwood referred to. Here brier and bush were mixed in dense confusion, intermixed with some beautiful wild flowers, lone relics of the decaying summer, which still struggled into the light, as if pleading for a longer lease on life. The hunter sprang nimbly into the tree, followed by his companion, who, in spite of his short and "bandy" legs and his thick corpulence, was agile as a cat.

They crawled along the branches till they reached those projecting from the other bank. Here, however, the limbs tapering off became rather weak, and there was yet a considerable distance to be gone over before sure foothold could be reached.

Stretching far over the end of the limb, having first slung his rifle upon his back, the hunter managed to reach a larger one above him, then grasped it firmly, and in a moment had doubled up over it, and passed toward the trunk of the opposite tree.

Now came Bogard's turn, as he lumbered along with his great weight of fat; he clutched wildly at the limb by which his companion had just passed over. Fortunately he succeeded in getting a good grip upon it, but as he made a spring for the purpose of "doubling," the one below, on which he was yet standing, snapped short off, and fell with a loud crash into the creek. But he still maintained his hold upon the upper limb, and, after various contortions of his obese body, managed to reach a safe part of the tree. Scarcely had he done so when both were startled by a loud splash, and in another moment a savage led his horse out of the water, where he had been hidden by the bushes on the banks. With a defiant whoop he sprang upon the back of his steed, and dashed away toward an opening in the forest; then reconnoitering, suddenly raised his rifle, and discharged it into the tree. The bullet struck a limb, just in front of Bogard, thus saving his

life by a hair's breadth. Wheeling, the Sioux dashed down the stream, and was lost in the thick wood below.

"Down, Bogard," exclaimed the hunter, "into the bush! You ought to thank Providence, man, that your mountain of flesh is not floating down the stream."

Lightly they sprung to the earth, and sped away into the forest for some distance; then clambering into a tree, they remained securely hidden there. From their position they could see the light cast by the camp-fire, around which the savages were gathered, and could hear the hum of voices.

The two soon descended from their uncomfortable quarters, having satisfied themselves that none of the enemy were lurking about, and with extreme caution approached the encampment to within a short distance. From their concealment they counted half a score of swarthy Sioux.

Standing with his face toward them was the white captive, of whom they had now a fair view. He was of ordinary height, apparently about twenty-five years of age. His dress consisted of a stout suit of buckskin; an enormous pair of top-boots came up above his knees, and served in the stead of leggings. His face was frank and open. His profuse hair was kept in place by a slouch hat with a brim of wide dimensions. He was securely fastened to a cottonwood, with his arms pinioned behind him. Sitting upon either side, his captors grimly smoked their pipes, and gave forth their guttural grunts of satisfaction, as they drew the long whiffs, and sent them upward on the breeze.

"Bogard, I know that boy. The bloody knives of those Sioux must never encircle his forehead."

"Jest my sentiments edzactly; but if I might suggest, his *chapeau*, as the Frenchers say—"

"Never mind what the French say," interrupted the hunter, somewhat impatiently. "I have a plan. Listen to it:

"It is impossible to free him without being discovered. I will go among their horses and, cutting them loose, shall put into their minds the notion to run away from their masters. I would have them to plunge through yon circle of theirs and create such confusion that we may take advantage of the *melee* and rush in to the rescue. Come, man," he added, as he found that his companion made no reply, "we've traveled too long together for that, old boy."

After a pause, Bogard exclaimed, seemingly mollified:

"That's so, colonel; gi'n us a twist o' your paw, and let's be *les bons amis*, as the Frenchers— Bang me!" he added, by way of an apology, "'twere a slip o' the tongue, colonel; but, pitch ahead, for I'm everlasting groggy on them Sioux."

Crawling on his hands and knees, the hunter soon reached the horses, who snorted with terror, as the strange apparition approached. This was as expected. Rapidly severing a half-dozen thongs, the horses dashed away, pell-mell, toward the fire, directly through the sav-

age circle, upsetting their owners, and scattering them right and left, out of their path. Rolling over in every direction, the warriors endeavored to avoid the hoofs of their frightened steeds; then, quickly recovering from their confusion, darted away after them. With a quick dash, the hunter reached the prisoner's side, and his bonds were loosed with one stroke of the knife.

"Follow quickly, friend, if you value life and liberty."

"Thankfully, my noble friend," answered the stranger; "but that savage has my choice rifle," he added, pointing to a stalwart warrior, who, though on guard as sentinel, had turned his back to the prisoner, and was looking after the campering horses. "I'll call things square when I get it." With a tremendous bound he sprung upon the savage, throttled him, seized his knife, drove it into his bosom, regained the rifle, and then joined the hunters. It was all done so silently, so quickly, so coolly, as to excite the hunter's astonishment and admiration.

"You are a brave lad and a ready hand, my young friend; but courage must give way for a while to cunning. Take to the woods at once, or all is lost;" and away the two sped, like deer before the hounds.

"If I mistake not, I have seen this face of yours; though in this villainous country it's hard for a Christian to tell what any man looks like. If I go not wide of my mark, you are that same trapper who saved my life at the mouth of the Yellowstone, when a wild horse that I rode would take it into his head to run away. It strikes me, indeed, that you are he whom they know in these parts as Red-Feather," ejaculated the stranger, as he ran at his deliverer's side.

"True, boy, ye remember it, do ye? It does me good to see that."

With a quick impulse the young man grasped his hand, saying:

"Roger Mayfield never yet forgot a kindness; and now, trapper, that I am indebted to you a second time, I hope I shall be able to pay it back."

"Well, my boy, I only ask you to put your trust in Red-Feather, and believe that he has a heart big enough to appreciate your good intentions."

Their ears were now startled by the loud cries of the savages, who were now apprised of the true state of the case. Simultaneously, Bogard waddled up, quite to the young stranger's amazement.

"The Sioux will have a nice leetle job o' boss-catchin'," drawled the fat fellow; "and I might suggest, as how they wouldn't be in the most affectionate mood, when they looks for the trail and finds Red-Feather's been among 'em, and the captive got off with a hull skin; and, for that matter," he added, to himself, "he looks as if he knewed which eend o' a gun to shoot out o'."

"Right, Bogard," said the leader, "and we will make cover with all possible dispatch, and then, Mayfield, if these Sioux give us breathing time, we will hear your story."

"I am concerned," said Mayfield, "about my

companion. I engaged the poor fellow to accompany me as a servant; and, when those thieving rascals overtook us, I lost sight of him very suddenly, in this very vicinity. He should be close at hand, unless, indeed, he has fallen—"

"Howly St. Patrick!" exclaimed a voice from the gloom of a dense thicket. "And is it your self, Mister Mayfield? Sure, here and I've been hunting yez, all the day till the night, thinkin' yez be kilt dead by the murtherin' haythens."

"An Irishman!" growled Bogard, between his teeth.

"Hello, Pat, and are you there?" exclaimed Mayfield, as a dark body rose from behind a log, to which he had crawled from the underbrush.

"Sure, and it's what's left of me," muttered Pat, joining them; "and, by my faith, ain't I most drowned; and, sure, haven't I been wadin' and swimmin' that dirty creek, from one eend till the other, till I got to this side of yez? Och hone, but it's a devil-be-cursed counthry, it is, bedad!"

A loud yell, close at hand, caused all parties to hurry forward; and, with an ejaculation of disgust, the Irishman tumbled after them.

They soon reached the rugged portion of the wood, where the ground descended abruptly, and was covered with huge bowlders. Into this ravine they plunged, affording, as it would seem, a complete shelter against the foe.

"Be the powers!" exclaimed the voice of Patrick Mulloney, "this is the most outlandish counthry I ever was in; and may the blessed Mither shield me, but if I was wunst out o' this place, I'd never come in to't again, not if ivery rock was a lump o' gold, and an Injin's head a piece o' siller."

The yells of the Indians died away, and, feeling secure, at least for the moment, Mayfield began an account of the various circumstances which led to his capture. He was a native of New England, claiming the old Bay State as his home. Of a roving disposition, and possessed of health, he had come out upon the plains for the purpose of gratifying his love of adventure. A few days before this history commences, he had set out, with the Irishman, and others, from the Yellowstone Post, on a buffalo-hunt. Becoming separated from their companions, they got lost, and were discovered by Sioux. The Irishman succeeded in giving them the slip by rolling up like a clod and lying still in the grass and brush. Mayfield, more unfortunate, finding resistance useless, surrendered himself into their hands.

Hardly had he finished his story, when there arose upon the night air a low, unearthly cry, swelling higher and higher, till, with an awful shriek, like some mortal in agony, it suddenly died away.

"Blessed Virgin, protect us!" prayed the Irishman. "It's a Banshee, or me name isn't Patrick Mulloney."

So wild, it startled every ear that heard it, again it burst upon them; sinking into a whisper, then floating away, like the wail of some lost spirit.

The winds suddenly arose, as if the caves of Æolus were opened; the strong trees bent before the blast; phantom voices filled the air like a carnival of furies. It was an awful burst of

atmospheric wrath—such as are only known on the plains. Then the moon came forth, and, for a moment, the scene would be lighted up with the brilliancy of day, causing rock and tree to stand out against the clear background in sharp relief; then, black clouds would scud over the heavens, vailing her from the earth, leaving every thing in darkness and gloom.

"What can that cry have been?" inquired Mayfield.

"Ay," said the hunter, "who can tell? Bogard, he added, "I told you that the tempest would roar through the cottonwood to-night."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mayfield; and, as he spoke, a stone came rolling past them; a rifle report echoed in their ears, and a yell, too human to belong to any but a Dacotah, sounded close at hand.

CHAPTER II.

THE RAVINE COMBAT.

SCARCELY had the report of the rifle-shot died away, when down came another rock from an adjacent cliff which overhung the ravine. It passed close to the Irishman.

"Arrah, be aisy, now," exclaimed he, "ye murtherin' spalpeens!"

"Come, Paddy, you'll have to keep that tongue o' yourn a little easier, now," growled Bogard. "But, hello, here!"

"Hist!" came from Red-Feather.

As he spoke, the moon shone from behind a cloud. It was only for a moment, yet long enough for all to recognize the outline of an Indian on a ledge of rocks above them. Quick as thought the hunter raised his rifle, and, with a sharp crack, it sent forth its messenger of death, echoing with the yell of the savage, as he tumbled over the rocks at their feet.

"Arrah, there!" exclaimed Pat, "ye'd better look foreninst ye, when yez be makin' such a big jump as that." And seizing the body, he pitched it with little ceremony into the bushes below, whistling at the same time the opening strain of "Teddy Lanigan's Wake."

A low warning caused him to cut short his music.

"What are the imps at now?" inquired Mayfield. "I'd like to know. I can stand a fair, open fight, but this thing of shooting in the dark is not to my mind."

"The Dacotah is fierce, and his thbirst for blood great," replied the hunter. "Their very silence proclaims that they are contriving some new trap for our destruction. It behooves us to be ready at a moment's warning."

"From the knowledge you evince, sir, I should infer," said Mayfield, "that you have lived in these wild parts for some time."

"Somewheres nigh fifteen years have I roamed the forests and plains of the great Northwest. From the lodges of the Blackfeet, to the lands of the Pawnee Loup, the name of Red-Feather has been a signal of defiance to his foe. But, friend, in charity forgive a man who has been more accustomed to commune with himself than with strangers, about the deed which he has done."

"Will I be deemed impertinent if I inquire the name of so noted a man, and why among these heathens he has sought his home?"

A pause followed this question, and then the hunter answered slowly:

"Nay, ye know me simply as a hunter, and sometimes, perhaps, a trapper; little good are names in these parts, so a man be friend or foe. But, look to your rifles, and keep close in the shadows of the rocks, while I examine into the true state of affairs."

With the silent tread of a shadow he made his reconnoissance; but no sound betrayed the presence of the foe. Suddenly, however, Pat was heard to exclaim, wrathfully:

"Arrah, ye haythen, and d'ye think to be playin' the shil-la-legh wid the son of a dacent Irishman, bad luck till yez?"

A tremendous tussling was heard in his direction, and presently over rolled Pat and an Indian in close embrace. But quickly the Irishman sprung up, and getting a fair blow at the savage, knocked him senseless to the ground.

"And so yez would be afther trying the fist-cuff wid a gintleman's sarvent, would ye, ye ould red naygur? Oh, hol be the powers! Patrick Mulloney is your man."

"Easy, Patrick, or the red imps will hear you and then it will be a bad job for us all, perhaps," said Mayfield, warningly.

"Aisy! d'ye say?" exclaimed Pat, in astonishment. "Aisy, man, whin a bloody varmint is a-buttin' af ye over the head; and faith, Misther Mayfield, it's not the loikes of your good lookin' silt, that could be aisly at all."

Bang! bang! came the reports of several rifle-shots, followed by a chorus of yells; while, by the dim light of the moon, several of the foes were seen to bound upon the ledges.

"If I might suggest," shouted Bogard, who began to feel in his element, "it'd make a feller as is sp'ilin' for a fout, feel good to send a leetle pill, and, for that matter, I might obsarve, several on 'em, right through thar ugly carcasses, with a streak o' moonlight arter it for physic;" and he sent a shot into the midst of the savages. This was the signal for the warfare to open, and the contest became warm. The savages had successfully passed the outer barrier of rocks, and, with great skill, placed themselves behind the lower hedges, fronting the concealment of the fugitives, and were now able to concentrate their fire upon the point of attack.

Mayfield, while discharging his rifle at the savages pressing over the rocks, kept a watch upon the fellow with whom Pat had had the tussle. In a few moments after the battle opened, he observed him arise from the ground, and dart swiftly toward the hunter. Afraid to shout, for fear of precipitating the danger, he sprung after the Indian, and just as the savage raised his knife to strike Red Feather in the back, Mayfield caught him around the arms, and held him fast, but found himself seized from behind at the same moment. Freeing himself with a powerful effort from this new adversary, and being obliged, in so doing, to let the other savage escape, he closed in with a brawny warrior who had scaled the rocks behind him.

For a few moments they tugged and wrestled without any very decided advantage. In the first stage of the conflict Mayfield had been obliged to drop his rifle, as he turned to encounter his new foe, and now relied upon his

physical strength alone, as his smaller weapons, such as knife and pistols, had been taken from him when captured. The scalping-knife of his foe being revealed, he determined to possess himself of it.

But his wily antagonist had no idea of giving him this vantage; and Mayfield, knowing the danger of permitting the savage to draw the weapon, resisted all efforts to that end.

Gradually they neared the rocks, which here broke off abruptly, with a fall of ten or twelve feet, into the bottom of the ravine. For a few moments they struggled fiercely, the conflict still raging around them. Above it all, Mayfield could hear the voice of Patrick, shouting defiance to his foes. The warrior, apparently tired of the conflict, determined to make it decisive one way or the other, and, by a quick movement, endeavored to give Mayfield a twist under his arm, when, having him thus at his mercy, he could draw the much-coveted knife. But, by a movement as quick as that of his adversary, Mayfield tripped the savage over the ledge, and was congratulating himself that he had got rid of an ugly customer, when the customer aforesaid, with a guttural "Ugh," as he went sliding over, caught him by his feet, and dragged him along.

Over they rolled, first Mayfield leading, and the Indian following, and then turn about, until they reached the bottom, where they lay panting for breath. Mayfield first recovered, and rushed upon the prostrate warrior, knocked almost senseless by his fall, and drawing the knife from his belt, dealt the red man his finishing blow, and then sat down upon a rock near at hand.

For the first time, he noticed that the noisy cries of the combatants had subsided. Filled with alarm, he clambered up the ravine, gaining foothold in the rocks, and grasping every little bush that grew across his way, till he reached the upper ledge. Then crawling on his hands and knees a short distance, discovered his rifle where the conflict had begun. Save the dead body of an Indian lying near it, the place was deserted by friend and foe, and as silent as the grave. Hurrying along the steep bank, a figure rose up from the gloom. He drew the knife, which he still retained, when a low hist warned him of Red-Feather's presence.

"May the Lord be thanked, but I thought the villains had cut you short."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mayfield, quietly; "I had an awkward tumble down this bill, but I guess my ugly friend of the scalp-lock, below there, is as bad off as I am for hard knocks, if there's any consolation in that, and I don't think he'll take any more scalps."

"Follow me," said the hunter—"we must make for the prairie, and cross it. If we can use this respite to reach a spot about a mile from here, we will be safe, for there Bogard and I are at home."

"And where are the imps, my friend, that they're so silent now?"

"They are behind each rock—peering from every tree. Hist! We come now to the open country."

As he spoke, they emerged upon a level tract, grown up with underbrush. Here they discov-

ered Bogard and the Irishman. Pat evidently was trying to get up a muss with the trapper, for the want of something else to do.

"Keep the tongue easy in your mouth, man," said the latter; "and, if I might suggest, it would be well to keep them crooked arms o' yourn close to your own crooked body; and, speakin' of Irishmen, it allus reminds me o' the Frenchers—a mean, low-lived set, them Canadians are, to be sure!"

"Faith, man," said Pat, whose quick blood was rising to a fever beat, "and if it's rail ould fisticuffs that yez be wantin', jist say the word, and it's Pathrick Mulloney, it is, that can be accommodatin' to yez."

"Silence!" commanded the hunter; "are you fools to be making quarrels among yourselves? If ye be eager for blood-letting, keep your eyes about you, and, perhaps, the crack of some Dacotah rifle may bring you a message you little desire."

The men stopped their jangling, although Bogard hung back, muttering what he *would* do if he only had Pat by himself.

After slowly groping along, they finally reached the edge of the prairie. There seemed to be no indications of the foe, and then, if ever, was the moment to attempt escape over the plain.

"I see no better way," observed the leader, "than to do as I have proposed. For, whether the Indians make any further movements to-night or not, it is sure that by day they would maneuver us out of our concealment. Now, if you have yourselves ready for a run, we will put our trust in the Great Spirit, and venture forth."

"Take the lead," replied Mayfield. "As for running, when it comes to that, I can show as limber a pair of legs as the best among ye."

"Be the powers, and it's not runnin' yez be talkin' aboot?" exclaimed Pat, ruefully. "An' sure, ain't I most kilt dead, intirely, wid runnin' over the rocks a'ready."

"Ay, man," drawled Bogard, mimicking him, "and if ye be not kilt intirely, there'll be a big nuisance left the longer; but if I might suggest," he added, "the Irishman made a purty good fout with the reds."

"Ah, faith," said Pat, "come, let a gintleman be shakin' hands wid ye, and we'll say no more aboot nothin' till we be through this little spree, and thin Pat Mulloney's at your sarvice."

Bogard shook hands with him and there was peace between them. Red Feather dropped on his knees, and the whole party followed. They crawled through the long grass swiftly and cautiously. In this way they had been on their journey, perhaps an hour, when the hunter gave his warning *hist*, and threw himself flat upon the earth, placing his ear close to the ground.

"Come, look across this plain," he at length addressed Mayfield, "away to the west; let your eyes rest upon that spot, blacker than the night; can you tell me what it is?"

"Truly, friend hunter, I am not much skilled in prairie-craft; but I should say, without much thinking, that it was a thick wood, or at the most, a big pile of rocks."

At that moment a low wail rose on the breeze, and it ended in a bark.

"Put your ear to the ground," said the hunter.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mayfield, as he did so, "I hear a rumbling sound, like an earthquake."

"That," replied the hunter, "comes from yonder spot; and that spot is a herd of buffaloes, with wolves at their heels. Listen; they come this way. Up, and follow me."

It was not a moment too soon, for the whole mass of frightened animals bore directly down upon them.

"Stay!" shouted Red-Feather, after they had run a distance; "running longer would be a waste of needed strength; stand around me and stretch out your arms, and remain as if hewn to stone."

And they stood close about him and stretched out their arms toward the black mass. Whether the immortality of man's spirit, expressed upon the forefront of his countenance, is recognized by the inferior animals, or whether the motionless objects before him seemed natural obstructions, certain it is that the shaggy beast leading the van stopped, snorted in wild terror, pawed the earth, then shot off to the right, followed by hundreds, pell-mell, after, while another division, under another leader, struck off to the left of the motionless group, leaving them hemmed in by streams of maddened, terrified beasts. Marvelous to relate, the helpless men stood unharmed. On rushed the mighty mass with the speed of the wind, and after them yelped the sneaking wolf. There was now no alternative but to trust to their limbs and make for the woods upon the right, and the whole party sped away, followed by some half dozen of the snarling brutes.

"Come on, Irishman," shouted Bogard. "If ye'd be leavin' the skin bull on your crooked body, I might suggest to ye to make your steps count double."

"Faith, and may ye take the advice to yourself, ye barrel o' packed pork," shouted Pat, wrathfully, as he stumbled along. "And if ye'd be takin' the advice of a dacent Irishman, ye'd have them same red streamers tucked away from the sight of the bastes."

They neared the forest, when Red-Feather turned and shot into the pursuing pack. This caused them to stop, and finally to decamp.

"Thank God," said Mayfield, "we are safe from these hounds. But, trapper, you led me a good run across yon open spot, and seeing that you are somewhat more weighty in years than myself, there must be good metal in those shanks of yours."

"They've done good service in my time; but, man, what may that be, crashing so awkwardly through the bushes?"

"Ah," said Mayfield, "perhaps your rifle awakened some of the savages, and we may have another run yet."

All dropped again in the bushes, and listened; but their watching proved of little avail, for the sounds ceased; and they began to grow fidgety, when suddenly Pat shouted:

"Bad luck to ye, top-knots, and d'ye think to frighten an Irishman?"

The next moment they found themselves surrounded by the Dacotahs. Resistance was useless, even if it had been thought of, for at that moment, across the prairie, came the party whom our friends thought safe enough in the woods they had left. In they dashed, helter-skelter, and dismounting, commenced an exciting jabber with the new party who had made their game prisoners.

CHAPTER III.

SILVER-TONGUE.

It was discovered that both hands belonged to the same tribe of Ogalala Dacotahs—a section of the great Sioux nation. The prisoners were mounted on spare horses, and they filed out into the open country, on the north. After an hour's riding, they came to a halt, and encamped for the few hours of the night yet remaining. With the first streak of dawn, the prisoners were roughly aroused, and soon breakfast was cooking. Pat, as usual was uneasy, and when unbound, that he might eat, spared no epithet that his tongue could repeat to convey to his dusky foes the small opinion which he, as an Irish gentleman, entertained of them and their manners. A scowl or a threatening movement would cause him to be silent for a moment; but his irrepressible spirit kept him in hot water continually. While uneasily shifting his position, he struck his foot against some obstruction, and fell headlong among the savages, upsetting them, and scattering their breakfast in every direction. With an imprecation, several sprung upon him, and flourished their knives in uncomfortable proximity to the poor fellow's head. A bright idea struck one of the warriors. Seizing Pat by the hair, he started on a full run round the camp, dragging the Irishman after him.

"Be gorrah! Hould off! Howly Saints, protect me!" he shouted. "Och hone, ye red baste, I've loose; ye fine gentleman, ye indacent villain. Blessed Virgin, deliver me!"

But finally he managed, with considerable dexterity, to trip the Indian, who, from mere exhaustion, had slackened his speed. Quick as thought, Pat freed himself, and grabbed his persecutor by the hair. Giving one mighty jerk, the savage sent up a terrific yell; out by the roots came a handful of his long, black locks.

"Bedad," shouted the Irishman, in triumph, "and it's Pat Mulloney kin play yez as good a game as your own, ye black spawn." The Indians were convulsed with laughter at this discomfiture of their companion; and when he, with the fury of a madman, rushed upon the Irishman, and would have tomahawked him, the others stayed his arm, and Pat was no more molested.

By sunrise the whole party mounted their horses, and struck off west by north. Toward the middle of the day, after continuous traveling, they hove in sight of the village, located in a small valley, through which ran a stream of water. This valley was protected on three sides by rocky spurs, crowned from peak to base with cottonwood and cedar. The village could be entered only upon one side toward which they were traveling, wh

stream forced itself through a low range of hills—space remaining upon one side for two to ride abreast. Into this the party entered. Reposing beneath them were the homes of the Dacotahs—a village composed of several hundred lodges, and some thousands of souls, together with dogs and horses spread round promiscuously. The day was warm and most of the people, were sunning themselves outside their wigwams, above whose quaint conical sides could be seen the scalp-poles of their respective chiefs. The party now gave signals of approach, by wild halloos, soon recognized by those below. By the time the cavalcade reached the bottom of the valley, the place was ringing with wild outcries. On they passed, through crowds of noisy women, yelping curs, and screeching children.

"Ah, bad luck till the scratchin' haythens," muttered Pat, "and it goes amazin' hard with civilized ears to be havin' sich a hilobaloo."

As they passed through the crowd, Bogard's red hair caught their eyes, whereupon the poor fellow was subjected to their persecutions. An old squaw who had made herself conspicuous in her annoyance of the captives, darted up a rock, and, as he passed, reached forward, gathered a handful of his hair and jerked it out. With a curse and a scowl of pain, Bogard turned, grasped her round the neck, and dropped her only when a warrior rode up and brandished his hatchet. Then she fell senseless under his horse's hoofs.

"Ye scrawny she-hag," he uttered, "when next ye pull the hair from the respectable head of the son o' Pennsylvany parents, ye'll be lookin' well that your carcass don't call for the buzzards to be takin' it 'way."

As the chief of the party dashed in advance, the crowd fell back, and they drew up before a long building in the center of the village. Here the captives dismounted and were conducted within. Its frame-work was composed of willow and hazel boughs, thickly laced, was banked with earth and hung with skins. Near the upper end of the interior was a raised seat, like a throne, ornamented with the finest furs. Before this buffalo-hides were spread in profusion. The prisoners were placed in the center of the apartment, and the warriors at once began to file in with stately tread, fully armed and streaked with paint. They formed a circle round the captives, sitting upon the robed floor. Mayfield glanced upon the throng. From none of the scowling faces could he glean a ray of hope. While awaiting developments they were startled by the beating of drums, and in a moment a wild refrain rose upon the air. The warriors within all lowered their plumed heads, as a tall savage drew aside the entrance curtain and held it from the floor. Mayfield was struck with wonder at this savage chivalry, and, with curiosity, watched the progress of the scene. His attention was quickly aroused by the low voice of Mulloney, exclaiming:

"By the powers, and ain't she a swate craythur?"

but upon closer inspection, as she neared them, that idea was dispelled. The warriors bowing before her, as she advanced with regal step, proclaimed her at once to be their chosen queen. She was purely white, her complexion being as pure as the lily. Her golden ringlets fell upon rounded shoulders draped in folds of the finest skins. Her eyes were full of a dreamy lustrousness, and as she smiled, the red lips parted over shining pearls. A circlet of eagle-feathers was placed upon her brow. In her left hand she bore a wand, or signet of royalty, made of braided reeds and porcupine-quills. With her right hand she gracefully held the drapery of her robe, showing an exquisitely small foot and well-turned ankle, incased within the slenderest idea of moccasins. Mayfield beheld with wonder an apparition so beautiful in a place so wild, and from the fact of her color, puzzled himself about her origin. He turned his eye inquiringly upon Red-Feather, in the hope of solving the mystery.

"I have heard of her," he replied; "Silver-Tongue, the pride of the Dacotahs; never saw her before."

A white-haired chieftain arose, after the queen had been seated, and harangued the assemblage. Mayfield could not understand a single word, yet it was evident that he was arguing for the death of the pale-faced foe.

"He wants 'em to burn us," whispered Bogard, who understood the Sioux tongue. "But I'm thinkin' Silver-Tongue will hev another tune to sing by-an'-by."

"It's a queer counthry this, if yez calls that singin'," growled the Irishman.

Further conversation was cut short, for one of their guards raised his rifle threateningly. Another warrior rose—a sour-looking fellow, who inveighed with terrible earnestness against the whites, causing his hearers to roll their eyes savagely and to grasp their weapons nervously, while not a few half-started to their feet. The warrior ceased, and a silence reigned throughout the council for some moments, when all at once there was a commotion at the lower end, and a tall Indian advanced through the rows, and bowed before the queen. He was handsome; yet in the face, clear from war-paint, were the marks of cruelty and cunning. Folding his arms, he turned and addressed the audience in a clear, persuasive voice.

The substance of his speech was: Before them were four captives. The Dacotahs had a right to do with them as they pleased. The queen was merciful; she was a woman; she wished them all saved. Would it not be better to balance the question, adopt two of the whites and give the others over to their captors for torture? Would it not be well to give the choice of life and death to the queen? And if the noble warriors before him were ready, the question would be submitted to their approval or rejection.

After a pause the orator seized a war-club laying near and passed it quietly to his neighbor, signifying his vote for adoption. The next passed it in like manner, but the third grasped it fiercely and struck it with a sounding blow upon the floor, deciding emphatically for the death of all.

While this was taking place the queen kept her eyes upon the prisoners, as if making her choice. Mayfield, who, when in society, had borne the reputation of a "lady's man," attempted to put on his most killing look, and flattered himself that, under the circumstances, it was not discreditable; while, to view the smirking of the Irishman was ludicrous in the extreme. The trappers bore out their character—stern, unyielding. Presently the vote to decide their fate came to be counted. A bare majority were in favor of adopting two and torturing two.

Who to be saved, and who to be tortured, was now the trying question. The queen gracefully arose to solve it. She spoke in clear, unhesitating tones to the warriors, who listened with attention. Then she faced the captives and said, in the best of English:

"Captives, Silver-Tongue has nothing to do now but to obey. The laws of her nation say that two of you must die. The task for me is painful. To give you all a chance for life, I have here four little reeds—two short, and two long. Whosoever shall pull the former shall be given into the hands of the braves; the latter are set aside for adoption."

She extended her hand, containing the little messengers of life and death, toward Mayfield. With a determined air he drew forth a *long* one. His eyes met those of the queen; they gazed at each other for a moment, and then his fell, while a perceptible blush suffused her cheeks. The hunter's turn came. The Indians sprung to their feet and scowled savagely. It was evident they had determined how his choice should be. With a collected movement he drew forth, as he expected, a *short* reed. The savages gave vent to their delight, and the hunter smiled scornfully. Now Pat put forth his brawny fist.

"Och, howly Mither, but it's a nasty job to be pullin' one's own life out wid one's own hand. Sure, ye swate crayther, and ye'll not be afther lettin' of me pull one o' them nayger's own short ones! Och hone, but it's a sorra counthry is this!"

Then, with a dive, he drew forth, to his inexpressible joy, a long one, and turning to Bogard, for whom there remained but death, said, in a voice half taunting, half sorrowful:

"Sorra's the time, Bandy-legs, but I towld ye the haythen would be afther the two of your heads—bad luck to 'em, I say!"

Bogard grasped the remaining stick.

"Ye red varmints," he exclaimed, "ye think ye kin frighten Jim Bogard, do ye? If I might suggest, thar'll be a drefful loose time afore fire burns around this yer indi-widdle's bones."

They were led forth from the council-house, through the center of the village, to prison. Crowds of women and children thronged their path, almost blocking their progress. One young squaw, bolder than her companions, ran close up to the Irishman to get a good look at him, when, with a sudden movement, he threw out his hand and drew her head under his arm, giving her a smacking kiss upon her full lips.

"Och, ye swate beauty!" he exclaimed, rolling his tongue around, "it's dilywicious."

The girl, taken aback at the Irishman's au-

dacity, stood perfectly still, amid the jeers of her companions.

They brought up before a large, circular lodge, which they entered and descended into the room, for the floor was excavated some two or three feet, and was strewn with wild skins. Here their guards left them securely imprisoned. Throwing himself upon a pile of these skins, the Irishman exclaimed:

"Och, sure, Bandylegs, and ye shouldn't be takin' it sorrowful. Ivery man must, sooner or later, stip off the stage o' life, and ye'll be burnt off, instead o' dying, like common folks, which must be a satisfaction to them as likes it."

"Cheer up, my good friend," said Mayfield to Red-Feather, "while there is life there is hope."

"Do you think I'm staggered and helpless?" and the hunter's eyes glowed. "Far from it! Another sun, and Red-Feather, with Bogard there, will be bounding over the prairies."

"It's my 'pinion, adzactly," drawled Bogard, as he stretched and yawned lazily on the soft robes.

"Arrah, but yez a lazy dog, Bandylegs. Why don't ye presarve yer silt-respect, even in this haythen counthry, and stand up to it like a man?"

"An' kiss a nasty red wench what hasn't seen water this season," added the man on the floor.

"Be quiet!" commanded Red-Feather.

"We have work before us—let us sleep," and all were soon refreshing their weary limbs in repose.

CHAPTER IV.

QUEEN VS. CAPTIVE.

THE next morning dawned bright; and the captives were awakened by their guard, who entered with breakfast, which, while not of the most *civilized* nature, was yet keenly relished.

Mayfield's thoughts ran upon the beautiful young queen so strongly that he made bold to ask one of the warriors, who brought his breakfast, who she was, and how she became queen; receiving for answer the very sententious expression:

"Medicine; um great medicine!"

About an hour after the meal had been disposed of, the door was once more opened, and the warrior, who had the day before argued in council for their adoption, entered, and motioned to Mayfield to follow him. Mayfield would have his guide talk, but had his first attempt thus answered:

"Injin no talk; bujin obey queen."

"The queen, did you say? Look here," said Mayfield, as he followed. "If you are going to take me before her gracious majesty, your humble servant—owing to circumstances—would like to fix his toilet a little."

But no; the Indian caused him to walk briskly along, and thus they traversed the village and drew up before the queen's tent, where, at a signal, the guide drew aside the entrance-curtain, and Mayfield was ushered into the presence of the Dacotah Queen. The circlet of eagle-feathers had been removed, and the mass of golden ringlets now pushed back from her brow

gathered upon her neck and fell upon her shoulders.

She was reclining upon a couch, and every thing evinced the dignity of her station. The floor was raised by willow-work from the earth, and carpeted with buffalo-hides. Her lithe form was incased in a tight bodice, made from the skin of the deer, finely dressed. A robe, made from fine cloth, which had, beyond doubt, come from the frontier, formed the graceful drapery of her queenly skirt. Bowing with dignity as he entered, Mayfield was pointed to a seat near her when she at once addressed him:

"Be seated. I have sent for you to know by what temerity you dare to invade the hunting-grounds of my people; and why you cruelly slew our kinsmen. Beware, sir," she added, somewhat haughtily, as she saw him about to interrupt her. "You are addressing the queen?"

"Oh, mighty queen!" replied Mayfield, with much gravity, placing his hand upon his heart, and executing an obsequious bow, "why does the steed fly to the magnet, or the moth hover around the blazing light? Could any one hear of Silver-Tongue, the Pride of the Dacotahs, and fail to have the flames of curiosity kindled in his breast? Could he remain distant from so favored a people, and live in peace, till he had seen the beautiful ideal of the Dacotahs' savage worship?"

"It is not well," she answered, in a tone meant to be severe; "the pale-face speaks with double-tongue; the queen hears, but the white's brave song can not deceive her." Then, turning to the warrior, who still remained with arms folded, scowling savagely upon the young adventurer, she motioned to him to withdraw. Again regarding Mayfield, a change came over the expression of her face, and she added with a tinge of sadness in her tone:

"Oh, friend, if I may call you such, listen to the words of an unhappy girl—"

"What!" exclaimed Mayfield, in surprise, interrupting her. "The queen forgets that she is talking to a prisoner."

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed, in a tone of deprecation, "rather a slave of slaves. While that savage is by, it is well enough to humble yourself, before the queen: but, now we are alone, I beg your sympathy, while, with your permission, I unfold a story, which, though strange, is true. I have made bold in sending for you, supposing you to be the leader—"

"I beg pardon!" interrupted the young man, again; "but allow me to correct you. I am not the leader of this party; that noble man, Red-Feather, who is condemned to torture, is the one in question. I pray God," he continued, in a tone intended to rebuke her, "I pray God that he may escape the clutches of his foes, and find, somewhere, those who have mercy in their hearts."

"Do you think that I willingly consign him to the stake?" inquired she.

"Surely, as queen, you have authority to act as you please," and Mayfield spoke somewhat sternly.

Covering her face with her hands, she sat for

a few moments in silence, and when she removed them, tears were glistening upon either cheek.

"I have a story to tell," she went on, after a pause. "I will confide it to you, now that I have gone thus far. In the first place, you behold a captive white girl, rather than an Indian queen. Strange as it may seem, my every motion is watched, and I no more dare issue an order, contrary to the wishes of the people, (who worship me as their pet and pride, but do not obey me,) than I would take wings and attempt to fly. Entertain a better opinion of my heart when I tell you that I have made arrangements with a faithful subject, by which your friends may hope to escape from the danger which threatens them. He has been intrusted with their torture, and I have ordered him to so confine them, that, with little trouble, they may free themselves, and, if they possess courage, may escape from this valley. The warrior who directed you here is called chief of the tribe, since it is he who leads them to battle, and controls the council-house. While he is chief, I am queen; the *dignity* of the nation is vested in me; therefore, by consummating a marriage with me, he would mount to the highest station—grasping the absolute power which he covets. He is handsome, subtle, cruel, and brave; he has made overtures to me, and, with the power he possesses over the minds of the people, can direct their passions into any channel. Knowing not how to avoid my fate, I have put him off with indefinite answers, endeavoring to avert a condition which becomes every hour, the more I think of it, worse than death.

"But you would know, I suppose, by what strange circumstances I find myself a captive and a queen? The incidents attending my entrance into the tribe were kept fresh in my mind by an old squaw, a faithful friend of mine. Fifteen years ago, my father, together with myself—then five years old—and others, were traveling across the prairies, far to the East, when one day we were attacked by a body of Sioux, and most of the emigrants were killed or captured. Whether my dear parent was among the slain, I can not tell. Suffice it to say, I was carried in triumph to this place; here I was left at liberty to come and go as I pleased.

"By-and-by, the grief which I experienced at the separation from my father subsided, and I began to sport with the rest of the children. It so happened that the chief who appropriated me was the head man of the tribe; by him I was adopted into his family, and became warmly attached to him by reason of his great kindness. Naturally of a willful disposition, my whims were gratified, and, under this discipline, I grew into an imperious girl, fawned on, and looked up to by those whom I chose to make my associates. Yet, by some natural impulse, I felt that my white blood separated me from the mass; consequently, I made few friends outside my adopted father's tent. The idea of making me a queen, after his death, had long been a favorite project of the old chief's; consequently, at his demise, more than a year since.

I was formally conceded the position which, alas, I now hold.

"At first everything went smoothly, and I imagined it an enviable lot to be a queen over such a people, with every wish calmly considered and generally gratified. Wijunjou, to whom I referred a few moments ago—with whom, when a child, I always was at variance—began to profess attachment to me, and finally has asked me to become his wife. What strengthens the fetters about me is the fact that the old chief left it as his wish that I should unite myself to the most daring warrior of the tribe; and had already intimated Wijunjou as his choice, while popular opinion has also pointed him out. Through his efforts my power here—which, a short time ago, was almost limitless—is waning, and I am, to-day, as much a captive as yourself. You may deem it strange that this chief should advocate the adoption of yourself and companion. He did so thinking to gain my good-will and popular applause. In sending for you to-day, I thought it the best plan, in setting aside his jealousy and suspicion, to employ him to guide you hither. You see my condition. I appeal to you, as of the same race, for pity and aid. Think me not stepping beyond the bounds of delicacy, in soliciting your assistance, strangers as we are; but my forlorn condition must be my excuse."

As she finished, she bent toward him, with a childish, eager expression upon her beautiful features. Her hand rested on the couch next to Mayfield; the young man lifted it to his lips, which she did not resist, and retaining it in his own, exclaimed, in a voice of earnestness:

"You may rest safe in the faith of Roger Mayfield, when he tells you that, with God's help, he will effect your rescue."

"May Heaven bless you!" she exclaimed. "I can never repay you for the interest you have shown in an unknown captive; but I forget that you know not what name to call me. You have heard that of Silver-Tongue. Forget it as a savage title, meaning nothing. Call me Adele, for such was the name given me by my old friend, the squaw."

"You have, then, no idea of your parentage?" inquired Mayfield, with interest.

"None," she replied; "all is too indistinct, of what I remember, to form any definite idea about my home or parentage. But, my friend, it will not do for you to remain longer, lest Wijunjou, in a fit of jealousy, might visit destruction on your head. Go, and I will endeavor to lead the crafty warrior astray."

With a wave of the hand, she bade him leave her, and he, head and ears in love, blundered to the door, where he met the scowling Wijunjou, who led him back to his confinement.

As he passed back through the village, he saw the stakes and the fagots. He shuddered at the ghastly preparations for the horrible human sacrifice. When he entered the lodge, he found the hunter toying with a small knife.

"Ha! my friend, and may I be so bold as to inquire where you came across that precious jewel?"

"I carry it here," replied the hunter, pointing to a secret pocket in the inside of his hunting-

frock. "With this I propose to free Bogard and myself before we shall be completely bound at the stake. When the proper moment arrives, we will make one desperate stroke for liberty."

"You are fortunate," said Mayfield, "and I may tell you, also, that the queen has ordered one of her faithful subjects so to confine you at the stake that you can free yourself with ease."

"Do I hear aright?" said the hunter, thoughtfully; "the queen will free us! Singular," he added, "what strange feelings thrill me, when I behold that child-woman. So like—so like"—and he bent his head upon his hand and was soon absorbed in his own evidently sad reflections.

Pat, too, had been musing, and now broke out:

"Good luck till yez, Bandylegs, but ye'll have to be makin' good use o' them same pins o' yours, when Mr. Red-Feather is afther a-cuttin' of ye loose."

"Keep that same tongue civil atween your teeth," replied Bogard. "When the varmints find thar captives hev escaped, ye kin gamble on to't that them crooked arms o' yourn will burn like dry cottonwood. If I might make a little suggestion, it would be well for ye to say your prayers aforehand, ef ye knows any, which I don't s'pose ye does."

"Faith, and it's haythen counthry, to think o' burnin' dacent folks. Bedad, and there's plenty o' firewood widout takin' a pair Christian for the same. Prayers, is it? Nivir a bit of the ro ary will I run over, jist to please the bloody blackguards."

"Not even to please that squaw ye smacked so lovin'-like?"

"Arrah, then, jist be aisy about that red herrin'. But it's niver a squaw ye'll smack, Bandy. Hadn't you better be after sindin' for the praast, me boy? Sure these scavengers 'av' got a praast, the howlin', screechin' thaves."

"What do you suppose they want a priest for, greeny?" asked Bogard, with a sly twinkle of the eye.

"A praast for? What a quistion for a Christian man; but that ye ain't, Bandylegs. Sure, an' who marries the squaws, if the praast don't?"

"A priest marry the squaws? Ha! ha! that's as good as venison made out o' buffler's hide. Wouldn't one priest have a good time with all the Dacotah shes for his wives?"

"Look here, Bandy—you're an irriverint rascal, an' it'll do yez good to scorch a little. I'll not converse wid ye to make ye be sinnin' whin yez ought to be a prayin'," and Pat took himself to the further side of the prison-lodge.

CHAPTER V.

THE DASH FOR FREEDOM.

THE next morning they were aroused by the beating of drums. About the middle of the forenoon the door of their prison swung open, and two savages entered and led them out.

Mayfield and the Irishman were detained near the lodge, while the others were conveyed to the center of the village, and bound to the two stakes. Mayfield noticed with exultation that the hands of the two captives were not

fastened at all, thus proving that the queen had kept her promise. A stout thong, however, passed round their bodies and up under their arms, continuing on round the stake, where it was fastened.

Scarcely had the men been thus securely bound when a file of fiercely-painted and grotesquely-dressed warriors, headed by four women, marched down the main avenue. As they neared the scene, the men formed a circle round the squaws, who were dressed in short skirts, and in leggings worked with feathers. Their hair was gathered in long braids down their shoulders. In their hands each held a scalp that had been taken from the lodges of their respective chiefs. These trophies they held aloft, as a signal to commence a wild dance about the hunters. Brandishing their weapons, and giving utterance to sharp whoops and yells, their feelings became wrought up and their motions quickened, till they swept round in a perfect whirlwind. Mournful wailings of women rose on the air in disjointed utterances, as they echoed the howls and the hisses of the braves. Each warrior, as he passed near the captives, would thrust out his weapon, as if about to hack them to pieces; then, contorting their faces into all manner of shapes, would signify what terrible pain and agony would accompany the torture.

Wijunjou issued from the queen's pavilion, and came toward Mayfield. "Well, chief," said Roger, "those imps of yours seem to be having a happy time of it all to themselves. I suppose you consider it a brave thing to torture helpless prisoners, don't you?"

"Pale-face tongue too long—want cuttin' off!" was the laconic answer.

"Cut away, you cut-throat, since that is your only talent. The Sioux are nothing but a set of cowards, anyhow!" With a start, Wijunjou seized his tomahawk, flourished it in the air, but returned it to his girdle, saying, in a low, fierce voice:

"Wijunjou no swine—no coward. Wijunjou mighty Dacotah—big nation—very brave."

"You call it brave, do you, to have men tied? Shame on such cowardice!"

"Wijunjou no burn," replied the savage, quickly, evidently anxious to give Mayfield a good opinion of his tribe. "Dacotahs' Great Spirit tell 'em to put de pale-face away; too many long-knives; kill all buffalo from red-man; white man come, take all poor Injin's huntin'-grounds; ebery year come closer, and push poor Injin away ober de mountings; by-an'-by, push 'em into big salt water, and den Injin be no more. Injin must kill white man, or white man kill Injin."

"Pretty well put, my good fellow," laughed Mayfield; "pretty near the truth, I reckon, if accounts were cast up and balanced."

"Wijunjou and his braves sweep white man away," continued the chief, "take back all huntin'-grounds from pale face, and hab free country some day."

"Don't fool yourself with that," replied Mayfield, laughing; "Wijunjou will have to leave here himself some day."

"Ugh!" and the warrior peered into Mayfield's face to seek further enlightenment.

"What pale-face mean? Been talkin' too muc. to queen. Wijunjou chief here; no 'low dat—"

"Och, sure, and they're goin' to burn Bandy-legs. May St. Pathrick keep the howlin' flame from his precious body!" groaned Mulloney, in whose heart, notwithstanding the badinage passing between them, there had sprung up a warm feeling for the "suggesting" trapper.

As he spoke the savages lighted the fires. Suddenly, in the midst of these fearful preparations, they noticed Red-Feather, by a quick movement, draw the knife from his bosom, where it had been concealed, and in a moment cut himself loose, while, with a bound, he scattered the fagots from before his companion, and cut him free; then, shouting for him to do as he did, seized a brand that lay in his path, and sprung into the midst of the throng, dashing his fagot right and left. The surprise was complete, for the two men broke, with a huzza, through the lines, and dashed down the street in the direction of the mountain gorge. Finding their prizes leaving them, with the prospect of complete escape, the whole populace turned out in pursuit. Now ensued a scene of confusion which beggars description. Hooting, and yelling, and pushing, the crowd came on, stumbling and falling over one another; first one down and then another, the whole uproar heightened by the discharge of rifles, and the whoops of the trappers. Some of the warriors sprung to their horses; but it became impossible to force their way through the excited throng. The fugitives still held their own, and headed in Mayfield's direction. Wijunjou threw himself before their path, being unarmed, and sought to bar their progress. But Red-Feather's mettle was up. Bounding toward the chief, he felled him with one blow, and as he passed, shouted:

"Come on, Mayfield, now's your chance!"

"No, thank you; guess I'll remain," shouted he, in answer.

"Well, then," hallooed the hunter, "I'll come back some of these days, and help you and your princess." And with a shout he dashed swiftly on.

Immediately after him waddled Bogard, with a speed that promised to outdo all others.

"Come on, Irishman!" he shouted as he went squirming, rushing by. "If I might suggest to ye, the prairie would be a good place to exercise in."

"Much obleeged to ye, Red-head," answered Pat, half defiantly, half sorrowfully; "can't be lavin' Misther Mayfield; he and myself are covered with the same feather."

But Bogard was far from bearing. A warrior dashed through the crowd, and with a few bounds reached the hunter's side. Red-Feather stopped and turned upon his antagonist. They were in a narrow gully, and the conflict, of course, became hand to hand. The crowd below sent up yells of triumph, as they neared the scene. Suddenly Bogard was seen to come to the aid of his friend; he stooped, and picked up a stone, and, like David of old, hurled it at the head of the warrior, knocking him senseless into the bottom of the gully. With loud shouts the fugitives sprung onward, and disappeared over the brow of the hill.

Presently the populace came surging back, and they scowled fiercely upon Mayfield and his companion; and some, more vindictive than the rest, discharged various missiles at them, thus seeking to vent their rage and disappointment.

Wijunjou, who had recovered from the blow given him by the hunter, with a scowl remanded them to prison.

"Och, ye red haythen," exclaimed the Irishman, "ye needn't be lookin' so mighty cross at a gentleman, as is Patrick Mulloney, which is more nor can be said o' your ugly self!"

When again within their prison Pat gave a whoop; "Bedad, but isn't Bandy-legs a duck ov a man! Be the powers, but Pat Mulloney is his friend. Whoop! may the blessed Virgin—not the queen, Misther Mayfield—jist take Bandy to her own self, an' keep him till a better day!"

But Mayfield was in no mood for exultation. The terrible danger of his friends impressed him too painfully for words. Would the savages keep their faith and adopt him and his servant into their tribe, or would they, in revenge, seize and give them up to the sacrifice of the flames?

CHAPTER VI.

THE WARNING.

WHEN the excitement consequent upon the escape of the hunters had died out, the queen, at the suggestion, or rather command, of Wijunjou, issued an order for the ceremony of adoption to take place. After they were formally initiated into the tribe, they were nominally granted the freedom of the village, though every motion was watched, and no arms were permitted them. The Irishman was granted more liberty of action than Mayfield, and, by his free and easy manners, quite won the hearts of the maidens of the tribe. Wijunjou followed Mayfield, however, with a jealous and suspicious eye, and kept dogging his steps continually.

Sometimes the young man met Adele, and enjoyed a few moments' conversation with her; but these conferences were few and short. Mayfield felt his position growing unsafe; for the sullen warriors had their jealousies aroused, now that the queen had extended to him so many favors; and when he showed himself alone, it did not take long to see, in their lowering brows and flashing eyes, unconquerable hate.

There was, in the village, a young warrior, who, by his kindness and unswerving fidelity to the queen, had won for himself her confidence and friendship. One afternoon, about a month after he had been a captive, Mayfield saw this young Indian approaching. The Sioux spoke, and, as he did so, stooped down to pick up his knife, which he purposely dropped, whispering:

"Be ready, when the moon shines, to come to the tent of the queen. Wi-je-gogh will lead the way." Then he was gone, leaving Mayfield to ponder over what he had heard. But even this did not escape the eagle eye of Wijunjou, who was, as usual, loitering by. The chief advanced and said:

"Silver Tongue send pale-face message—ha! Was it soft words—ha?" and he grinned hideously at his supposed discovery.

"Pshaw, chief," laughed Mayfield, unconcern-

edly, "we white folks don't bother ourselves about soft words; we leave old woman like the Sioux to engage in such business."

"No, no," answered the Indian quickly, "Dacotah no speak soft words; leave dat for squaw; but pale-face make love to queen; queen send love to pale-face. Better take care! Wijunjou no 'low dat. Burn white captive!"

"Take care for yourself, or I'll report you to the queen, and have you up before the council; how would you fancy that?"

The Indian's eye flashed as he replied:

"Silver-Tongue not been queen long; Wijunjou soon be chief; make Silver-Tongue his squaw; cook Wijunjou supper; clean Wijunjou house."

"Ah, you copperhead!" exclaimed Mayfield sharply. "Better keep a bright lookout for your own top-knot; may be you won't need any house-cleaning."

"White-face keep eyes open, he see Wijunjou be strong; be *big* chief, some day," and with these words the wily savage, drawing his gayly decorated blanket around him, stalked away.

Anxiously, Roger awaited the approach of night; and, when the moon threw her first flood of light into the valley, as he lay in his tent, he heard footsteps. Wi-je-gogh entered, and signified for him to follow. Silently they stepped out into the quiet street, and passed on toward the queen's lodge. They met no one until about entering the young queen's pavilion, when they were startled by a figure that passed them. It was Wijunjou. Wi-je-gogh gave a low signal, and the voice of the queen bade them enter. The Indian followed, tightly closing the skin-lined door, and stood in the shadows of the lodge corner, waiting with folded arms. Mayfield glanced distrustfully at him.

"You need not fear Wi-je-gogh," said Adele; "he is a tried and trusted friend I have sent for you," she continued, "to warn you that Wijunjou has laid a plot against your life, which is to take effect before three suns shall rise and set; and, unwilling to trust the message to any one, I thought the best way would be to inform you in person, as delay is dangerous."

"I expected as much," the young man answered; "and, if I mistake not, some new danger threatens you!"

"My friend, I did not send for you for the purpose of speaking of myself. My fears for your own safety caused me to seek this interview. I felt it my duty to warn you of the danger, and to tell you that Wi-je-gogh here, who has served me on more than one occasion, will guide you through the mountains to the prairies." She bent her head, and toyed with the fringing of her robe, in evident emotion.

"Adele, you can not think me so destitute of gratitude, that I would make such unworthy use of your kindness, and leave you to a fate worse than death? No, no. If you believe me to be a friend of yours, reveal the full extent of your danger—your trouble—your fears."

She turned her eyes full upon him. Never had Mayfield seen any one look so *dangerously* beautiful; and, while his heart gave a thump into his throat, he bowed submissive to the will of love.

"The issue," she said, "has come at last. Wijunjou has asked me, and for the last time, to be his wife. He gives me till day after tomorrow to decide; and then, if I do not acquiesce, he swears to make me his squaw, and force me from the throne. I refused to listen, and ordered him to leave the lodge; then, my friend, in his anger, he incautiously let slip the intelligence of his plans that I have conveyed to you."

"Surely, Wijunjou's designs are known to most of the tribe, and I scarcely think he would dare such a stroke as to attempt to depose you to make you his slave."

"Ah," she replied, "he would dare any thing. Courage on the war-path and eloquence in the council-house are the governing influences with an Indian. These attributes Wijunjou possesses. To be sure, he has some two or three wives now; but they are menials and slaves. If I had viewed his attentions with respect, I was still to be queen, and have every privilege that I now enjoy, except the one step in power which he would have over me as my husband. Refusing, he will reduce me to the abject condition of his squaws. Rather than accede to his demands, I would brave any fate."

"But," said Mayfield, "can you not take the bold step of arresting Wijunjou?"

"No, I am helpless; and, since the escape of the captives, the passions of the Dacotahs have been fearfully aroused, and not only your destruction, but my humiliation, have been resolved on."

"There can be but one course then, Adele, for us to pursue; that is, to trust in Providence, and flee the clutches of our foes. You, as queen, certainly possess some advantages. You can arrange some plan by which we may get the start of our foes."

"Ah! my friend," she replied, "I have already told you how closely I am guarded. As for escape, as far as my position is concerned, I am as helpless as yourself."

"I say it must be done," continued Mayfield, determinedly. "We must take all risks. My plan is this. To-morrow night, Wi-je-gogh will have three horses at the gorge, for yourself, the Irishman, and myself. At this hour, we will make our way thither; I will join you there. Once on the prairies, we can strike for the nearest station. The plan is bold—is hazardous."

"I can not think of endangering your life by an attempt to save mine," she replied. "So fly while you have the opportunity from the death that awaits you. I have no friends to mourn for me, while your coming is watched for, perhaps, by some heart that would be crushed in sorrow did you fail. Go, I beseech you. Wi-je-gogh will guide you, *to-night*, to the prairies."

"Not alone, Adele," he replied, with determination. "I can not be shaken in my purpose. Once for all, will you trust yourself into my hands, for weal or woe?"

Hesitating but a moment, she answered, in a low voice, bowing her head upon her bosom: "I will go with you. Even suffering, torture, death, are preferable to remaining here." Calling the faithful Sioux to her side, in low tones she conversed with him. He assented to the at-

tempt, and promised, on the succeeding night, to be ready with the horses at the rendezvous.

"My best of friends," she added, turning to Mayfield, "forgive me, I pray you, for the care I am imposing upon you. You are the only one in the world whom I can call friend"—and there was a deep pathos and sadness in her tone.

"Do not talk of it despondingly, Adele. As long as I live, rely upon me."

Adele turned her head to hide her embarrassment; there was silence on both sides for several moments, when they were startled by approaching footsteps. The voice of Wijunjou asked in the Indian tongue:

"Who is it that disturbs the silence of the night? Is the queen sick?"

"Wijunjou had better go to his lodge," replied Wi-je-gogh, in the same language. "The queen has been giving Wi-je-gogh orders for the morrow; and he stands guard over the house of Silver-Tongue."

To this Wijunjou gave a low answer that was not heard, and walked away. Wi-je-gogh came toward them and said in English:

"Pale-face better go to his tent; Wijunjou watch captive close. Go."

Mayfield extended his hand, to say "good-night." Adele grasped it, and said in a tone that inspired the deepest feeling:

"How shall I ever thank you? Take my prayers to the Great Spirit for your safety."

Mayfield raised the beautiful hand to his lips, and was gone.

Cautiously he made his way out of the pavilion, back to his own lodge. As he entered this he stumbled over the somnolent form of the Irishman. The latter started to his feet and rushed upon his master. "Och, ye murtherin' villain, would ye be stroikin' a man in his slape?" and he grasped Mayfield fiercely by the throat. The Irishman seemed bent on throwing him to the earth, half asleep, and filled with the idea that his companion was a savage. Having no other alternative, Mayfield struck the fellow, and sent him sprawling to the other end of the apartment.

"Faix, Misther Mayfield, what's the matter wid ye now?"

"Nothing, Pat. I've been experimenting on your cranium."

"Sure, Misther Mayfield, and may I be axin' your pardon, but I had sich a horrible draame! Faith and 'twas enough to make a man's hair stand on eend. Be the powers, and I thought ye were a red haythen, tryin' to burn me, sowl and body. Howly Saint Pathrick, and ye've most broken me head. Sure and I'll not be havin' any more sich draames, whin I wakes up wid sich a hard bounce as that on me noddle."

"Well, go to sleep, but don't dream any more, without you want another one of my experiments administered."

"That I don't, widout it's a fair fight, an' thin I'm wid ye, savin' that yez my own master, to be sure, an' God bless ye;" and he rolled up in his robes, and was soon snoring soundly.

As for the young hunter, little sleep visited his eyelids.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT.

SLOWLY the shadows of the momentous night began to gather over the village. Mayfield walked nervously within his tent. The Irishman, however, who was all glee at the prospect of an adventure, took matters more unconcernedly than his companion.

"Faix, Misther Mayfield," he said, breaking out of a brown study—"faix, sir, and it's yourself that be's goin' to carry off your own sweetheart; and it's Patrick Mulloney would be doing the same, sir."

"What do you mean, Patrick? Surely, no dark-eyed Dacotah has pierced your heart with the darts of love, has she?"

"Be me sowl, and it's not much of the piercin' she's done, sir; but it's the dartin' she's been after; for, be me faith, whiniver I'd go to come nigh her, she'd be dartin' away from foreninst me, bedad. But, sure, sir, and she's very bashful; and I thinks the loikes of her, if I could prewail on her to go home wid me, would make Mulloney a clever wife, sir."

"A great pity, Pat, that we can't accommodate your sweetheart; but you know the queen must be attended to, above all others."

"Sure, and I be's a-thinkin' much o' Silver-Tongue; but, faix, and I thinks a leetle more o' my beauty, sir! An' did ye niver see her? Ah! she's like the avening star that shines o' the mornings."

"Well, I guess you'll have to give her up for the present, Pat; and I know you will be willing to help me all you can."

"May the howly Vargin bate me nose into spoons, if I don't do my purtiest."

The hour arrived, and Mayfield and his companion ventured forth. After an hour's tortuous winding among the lodges, for fear of discovery, they reached the designated spot. Here they found Wi-je-gogh and Adele waiting. The Indian brought with him a couple of rifles, which he had obtained without suspicion. They proved to be their own weapons, with the full complement of ammunition. The horses, too, were their own.

"Ah, my friend," said Adele, "how glad I am that you are safely here. I am ready, and my fears increase every moment we delay."

"All right and ready, my dear miss! Allow me to help you on your horse. Now then, we are off. Good-by, Wi-je-gogh. If I ever get the chance, I will do you a good turn," and with that the little cavalcade moved on.

"I am fearful," said Adele, after they had ridden some distance, "that we shall be overtaken. Until we are clear from these mountains I shall not feel safe. I am impressed with the idea that Wijunjou overheard our conversation last evening, and, until our horses' feet touch the long grass of the prairie, I cannot hope for safety, Roger." It was the first time she had called him so.

"May I niver see daylight ag'in, if me two eyes didn't behold an Injin's head a-bobbin from behind that big rock ayant there?" And the Irishman pointed with his finger to a great boulder that loomed up at the end of the rocky pass.

Adele saw that Mayfield hesitated.

"Be not afraid; if the venture must be made, I will follow wherever you lead."

"Then we will go;" and he struck his heavy-heeled boots into his horse's sides, and led the way.

Their horses seemed inspired with terror, and pranced riotously about—particularly the one which Adele rode—but she had been early taught to ride the mustangs of the prairies, and now sat as firm as a Sioux upon the restive animal.

Mayfield quelled his own, and rode to her side. The beast was urged to go on, but at that moment dark figures sprung from the shadows of the pass, and attempted to seize the bridles of their horses, while the voice of Wijunjou was heard, shouting:

"Pale-face no run away—Wijunjou kill."

Mayfield rode down the foremost savage, and strove to reach Adele's side, but she exclaimed:

"Escape, Roger! I will go no further; it is impossible. Quick! I see more coming up from below. Oh, fly! or you will be surrounded."

"Never, Adele!" And he dashed in, helter-skelter, among the throng, but found himself hemmed in upon all sides—again a prisoner. Wijunjou secured Adele's horse, and was leading her down the valley again, when Mayfield sprung after, determined to rescue her at all hazards. A crowd of Sioux interposed, and her voice came floating back.

"Roger, if you have any love for me, fly. Perhaps the Great Spirit will enable you to come and save me yet. Good-by, and my prayers go with you."

And she was soon lost in the shadows of the defile. For a moment Mayfield hesitated; the voice of Mulloney recalled him to his danger.

"Quick, Mither Mayfield, or the haythens will be havin' ye," and a ball whistled past him from Pat's gun, cutting down a savage who attempted to seize the young man's horse. Scarcely knowing what he did, he dashed after the already fleeing Irishman, toward the prairie. The Sioux discharged their rifles, but without effect. So sure were the Indians of success, that they had not provided themselves with horses; consequently the fugitives soon left their pursuers behind them, and in a short time struck the bosom of the prairie. Mayfield was moody and silent. The Irishman's gay nature, however, seemed to have received a fresh impulse from his escape, but to his conversation Mayfield gave little heed.

"Howly Mither," he exclaimed, "but yonder be's a light; and mayhap it's some more o' the haythens at their torturin' sticks. Look, dear Mither Mayfield, and see for yoursilf."

Following the direction indicated, he saw a faint light in the midst of a small copse of cottonwood. They halted their steeds, to decide what course to pursue. Roger wrapped the blanket, which Wi je-gogh had given him, more closely about him, and turning to Pat, said:

"Come, Mulloney, we must delay here no longer. I am going to see who is encamped around yonder fire."

"The blessed saints protect us, Mr. Mayfield; but I thinks mesilf yez be crack-brained.

A-goin' to run your precious head into the fire that's right forninst ye?"

But Mayfield was already urging his way through the long, swelling grass. After journeying for more than an hour, during which time they often lost sight of the fire, they reached the wood, dismounted, and crawled into the thick undergrowth. From their position, they could see two stalwart figures seated around this fire; but their backs were turned, and the light was dim; hence they could not well determine who or what they were. After a few moments' scrutiny they made them out to be a couple of white hunters, evidently just camping for the night. Suddenly the Irishman, who was ahead, made a dash through the bushes, calling out at the top of his voice:

"Och, Bandylegs, and do me two eyes look at ye oncet more? Blessed be the saints that ye're safe yit, in this haythen counthry."

Mayfield clambered after him, and soon stood face to face with Red-Feather and Jim Bogard.

"Right glad, my friends, to see you," said Roger, regaining some of his spirit, "though I did think, for sure, I'd never bother your eyesight again."

"The pleasure is, indeed, reciprocated," replied the hunter, pressing his hand warmly.

"Wal, Irishman," said Bogard, addressing that worthy, "you are still hangin' round, are you? Got that tongue o' yourn shortened yit?"

"P'ace be to ye, ye red-headed skeleton, and it's jist mesilf that kin talk to ye in any shape ye be wantin'."

"Hush, Pat," commanded Mayfield; and then turned to Red-Feather. "It's a lucky thing that you happened so close at hand. I did not expect ever to see you again."

"Why, my friend? Did you think that I would desert you?" asked the hunter in a tone of quiet surprise.

"No, no, not that; I came to the conclusion that we were beyond the reach of help; but I see you have been cooking some supper. My ride and the excitement have whetted my appetite, and, with your leave, I will test its good qualities."

"You are welcome to it; and while Bogard gives it the finish, tell me about your adventures since I last saw you, and about that young queen. Did you make no effort to save her?"

"In good truth we did; the Irishman and the queen and myself started this very night, and were doing well enough till we came to the gorges. There Wijunjou burst upon us and bore her away."

"It is a Providence," said the hunter, "that you and your companion have escaped to-night, for we are thus strengthened to carry out our plans."

"Ah," said Mayfield, "I can imagine what they are. But first tell me how you managed after your exit from the village."

"Bogard and I, after we made our escape," returned the hunter, "struck immediately for the rendezvous where we had our peltries concealed; a couple of days enabled us to get them together, and then we started for the mouth of the Yellowstone. Reaching that post in safety, and without much adventure, we dis-

posed of our goods. With some of the proceeds, we purchased new animals and a complete outfit, and set out on our return for these parts a few days ago; and but a few moments since arrived in this spot."

"But, my good friend," inquired Mayfield, "are you not fearful of having such a bright blaze going? It alone guided us here, and can be seen for miles."

"The Sioux are close within their lodges. You need have no fear. Sleep peacefully, for tomorrow's light will shine upon busy times."

Mayfield and Pat, after being refreshed, wrapped themselves in their blankets, with their feet to the fire, and composed themselves for sleep.

The two hunters remained awake. They sat upon a fallen log, within the gleaming of the firelight, and kept a patient, silent watch. Red-Feather was aroused from one of his reveries by a noise on the prairie. At once he awakened the two sleepers, and concealed himself in the bushes. Scarcely had he done so, when a dark mass was seen approaching. Suddenly it halted and a figure dismounted from a horse and came toward the fire. As he neared them, all recognized the clear outlines of a white person. With a bound, Red-Feather reached his side, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed, "that comes with ready rifle, at this hour of the night?"

With a sudden movement the stranger sprung upon the hunter and hurled him to the earth.

"Take that, Red-Feather, and be not so hasty about challenging men before you have tried their mettle," and the stranger stalked toward the fire.

"Halt, stranger," cried Red-Feather, in a voice thick with passion. "Scarce any man can do as you have done, and live to know it. Before you take another step, state your errand and your name."

"Bosh, man," answered the stranger in a sneering voice, "don't try to frighten me in that way. Call me Ralph Margo, if ye want a handle; and as for treating you so rough, you must excuse me; but really I am not used to being handled by everybody, without so much as 'by your leave, sir.' As for my errand, it is easy told. You are going to rescue a captive among the Sioux; of course, you won't object to help."

"Well, sir, I will not refuse you the hospitality of our fire; but if you would temper your manners with a little more respect, it might be as well. How became you acquainted with our purpose?"

"I was at the fort," he replied, "when you came in. I heard of your intention to rescue Silver-Tongue. I intended joining you at the fort; circumstances prevented me; I tried to overtake you, but failed till the present moment. Is the answer satisfactory?"

"All things are made satisfactory, sooner or later, sir," said the hunter, sternly.

"No doubt, Red-Feather. Old scores, too, are included."

This was said with such significance of tone and demeanor that the hunter started as if he had been stung. As the stranger came into the light of the fire, Mayfield saw that he was a

sinister, dark-browed, but handsome-featured man, dressed as a hunter. The first impression was one of dislike. That the Irishman was not much prepossessed in Margo's favor, was soon discovered.

"And faix, and it's a moighty uncivil way to be axin' the leave of a gentleman's company. Howly Mither presarve us from them little snakes that be jumpin' about his two eyes."

Red-Feather advanced toward the fire, and Mayfield saw marks of suffering in his face. In a short time he fell into a feverish doze, in which Red-Feather, the stranger and Silver-Tongue were inextricably mixed.

CHAPTER VIII.

FREE TRAPPERS.

THE next morning was damp and drizzly, with every prospect of continuing so throughout the day. The stranger's appearance was not much better in the estimation of his companions by the clearer light of day; in fact, his demeanor threw the balance heavily against him.

Red-Feather moved about, but said little. It was evident that his mind was struggling with some strong emotion. The morning's meal was eaten in silence, and a general damper seemed to have fallen upon the party, with the exception, however, of Margo, who seemed in the best of spirits. Red-Feather soon informed them that he was ready to move forward.

"Our plan is this," said he. "Conceal ourselves near the village, communicate with Wi-je-gogh, if possible, and convey the queen off to the horses, which we will have waiting in the defile. Once outside, to make a dash for the Yellowstone."

"A very likely plan, too," sneered Margo.

"Be the powers, stranger!" exclaimed Pat, indignantly, "and if ye'd kape a civil tongue o' your head, ye'd be afther showin' your better parts to advantage."

"Shut up, bog-trotter, or you'll not have many breaths to draw, if you keep on in that style," and he looked threateningly at Pat; but he had roused the wrong man for once.

"Ye dirty spalpeen; and I'd spat in your ugly imitation of a face, if it wasn't that ye ain't good enough for that, even. Och, ye miserable villain, and ye'd better be takin' them snakes out o' your snappish eyes."

"Silence!" said the hunter, determinedly. "I will have no quarreling in my company. All who go my road will mount and follow."

Mayfield sprung with alacrity upon the back of his steed. In a few moments the whole party moved through the cottonwood.

"I know a passage," said the hunter, "by which we can enter the village unknown to the Sioux. It will be necessary to make a *detour* to the south; but, by good traveling, we may reach it by nightfall."

"Then," said Mayfield, "let us move forward, for my arm feels like having a chance at that rascal, Wijunjou."

"Indeed!" interposed Margo with a laugh.

"Yes, stranger," and Roger turned abruptly on him. "If you have any objections, just state them, and your humble servant will tender you plenty of satisfaction."

"Children should be seen, not heard," was the insulting reply.

"Let me tell you, then," said Roger, calmly, "if, besides the infliction of your company, you continue to burden us with your offensive speech, you shall feel the evidence of my good will, in ridding the country of a troublesome pest."

Margo made no further reply, and relapsed into silence.

"Hello, colonel!" suddenly ejaculated Bogard, "if these eyes o' mine are not mistaken, there's a body of Free Trappers camped below thar."

Almost at the same moment both parties discovered each other. Some half-dozen men were seen to mount on as many horses. From the nature of their attire it was evident that they belonged to a class of men called Free Trappers. Both parties commenced maneuvering, each endeavoring to cause the other to come forward first.

"Red Feather seems to have considerable fear of yonder body of men," said Margo.

"If so," replied the hunter, "Ralph Margo, evidently, is not; people generally are not afraid of their confederates; honest men have honest men's feelings, and try to avoid associating with villains."

Margo's face flushed, and he turned upon the hunter with the question:

"And may I inquire who you think they are?"

"Is it possible that you do not know?"

"I do not."

"Then, sir," said the hunter, calmly, "you will understand that those people yonder are nothing less than mountain outlaws!"

"Ah, say you so?" replied he, with a sudden gleam. "I think you are mistaken, for I recognize an old friend among the group. What, ho!" he called to the other party; "here, friends. Say, Jack Warren, is that you? I will go and see," he added, addressing Red-Feather, and the next moment was riding forward to meet them.

"Och, the baste!" exclaimed Pat. "Sure it is that 'birds of a feather will flock together.'"

"Come on, men," said the hunter; "should Margo prove to be in league with the villains, we may as well bring things to an issue, while we have the advantage of being prepared."

As they approached, they found the party to consist of villainous-looking fellows, armed and prepared for any emergency. To the best favored of the lot, who appeared to be the leader of the party, Margo was addressing himself, with the freedom of an old friend. As Red-Feather and his party drew up, Margo introduced his acquaintance as Jack Warren.

Mutual explanations followed, and from Warren's representation, it appeared that they were traveling toward the Yellowstone; had camped near them for the night, and were just starting on their day's journey when they were startled to behold Red-Feather and his companions; but were pleased to find his old friend Margo among them, and begged that the hunter would pardon them for a few moments, while they retired into the wood a distance, as

he had some important things to communicate to Margo, which, perhaps, he would not have the opportunity of doing again. Both withdrew into the wood. While the rest of his companions were watering their horses Red-Feather, under pretense of finding a more suitable place for the same purpose, soon followed in the direction taken by the two men. As he approached he heard the sound of voices, and could see them through the underbrush. Both were dismounted and in animated conversation, Margo being much excited.

"I tell you what it is, Jack!" he exclaimed, "I have made up my mind to have this devil done for and out of the way, and you must aid me. Our plan, you see, has failed. That young dare-devil and his wild Irishman, who escaped from the Sioux last night, re-enforced them. I have followed him too many years to fail now, when my revenge should be final and complete. You and your fellows must follow us. Attack the rest of his party and I will take care of him. You know the path we will take—the old 'South trail.' Ha! ha! he little thinks who I am; and no doubt the poor fool imagines he is about to realize his hopes. Vain hopes for him! But I must go; it won't do to delay. You will follow as soon as we get out of sight—"

The rest of the sentence was lost to the hunter. He had heard enough, however, and returned to his companions; and not a moment too soon, for Margo himself appeared and rejoined them.

"You must excuse me, friends," he said, by way of apology; "but it has been a long time since we met. We had a good many things to say. I am now at your service."

"Ah faix," said the Irishman, speaking at random, "and it's at the devil's own sarvice ye be; nor it ain't likely, no more is it, that ye hain't seen the villains since yesternight, when ye come a-sneakin' into honest men's camps."

Margo started at this home-thrust, but, for reasons best known to himself, saw fit to take no further notice of it. Several of Warren's party, however, including himself, cast lowering glances upon the undaunted son of Erin and evinced much sensitiveness at his allusions to their characters. But Red-Feather led forward, and Margo, whispering some words in Warren's ear, bid him good-by and dashed after.

No sooner were they out of sight than Red-Feather struck his course deep into the forest, and directly opposite to that on which they had set out.

"Surely," said Margo, "you are pursuing the wrong trail."

"Gently, stranger," replied the hunter; "Red-Feather has pursued a trail too often to be taught by a braggart and outlaw."

Margo sprung his horse to the hunter's side. His whole frame trembled with excitement. He hissed, rather than said, these words:

"Red-Feather, is it? That does well enough to frighten Indians, but to those who know him the name is of little concern. Do you not know, sir, that those men we left behind us are honorable hunters, much more so than a man by the name of Red Feather, if his former history was exploded? William Mo—"

"Stranger!" and the hunter raised his pistol. "Isabel!" hissed Margo, between his clinched teeth.

"Great heavens!" and Red-Feather's face underwent a change from pale to red, from red to pale so rapidly it could not be described. Mayfield could stand this no longer. Turning upon Margo he said fiercely, while his hand tightened round his rifle:

"Look here, stranger! That crowd of cut-throats back yonder seems to suit your style best. Now, then, you can either take the back track or conduct yourself as a gentleman while you impose yourself upon us. I want you to understand distinctly that I cannot be insulted, neither can my honorable friend be annoyed by any cowardly rascal, let him come from what quarter he will."

"Boys can talk; but as for Red-Feather, all the reputation he ever had—which was precious little—soon fell through, when he became dishonored—"

"Villain, silence!" and the hunter, worked up to a heat of passion, drew his pistol and turned upon Margo before he could defend himself, and planted it against his forehead and said, in a husky voice:

"Man! if you wish to appear before your Master, with all the sin of your guilty soul, say another word to finish that sentence and these brains of yours shall be scattered to the winds. Your confreres behind will fail to do your devilish work. Rest assured I know you now, and when we reach a convenient spot, eternal satisfaction shall be rendered between us. Shall it not? Speak, or this bullet shall accomplish its work this very moment."

"Be it so," the fellow said, sullenly. "I am at your mercy; but, look well to yourself. I have dogged you for years. As you say, we shall make eternal satisfaction."

Mayfield listened in surprise to this conversation, and turned his eyes continually, upon the one and then the other. A look of settled determination played about Red-Feather's features.

They penetrated deeper into the gloom of the forest, Margo preserving a moody silence the while. The rain descended, the cold wind rustled drearily past them, and the atmosphere seemed full of dull forebodings. Mayfield was awakened from a reverie by the voice of Bogard.

"There's the evidence of the villainy o' them Free Trappers," and he pointed to the marks of horses' feet that had but a few moments before crossed their path. They were heading back toward the mountains, and had, by the skill of Red-Feather, doubled the trail upon their pursuers, and were now really following them.

"Arrah, now, Misther Margo," exclaimed Pat, "sure, and ye ought to travel aisy; faix, and it's your company's gone afore ye."

"Silence, Irishman!" he answered, gruffly, "for I'm not in the mood to be trifling."

"Faix, and it's not much mood Red-Feather will be l'aving ye in, at all, ye small specimen of a great dale of bad manners. Bandylegs here would be ashamed to own ye," and he cast a furtive glance at Bogard.

"Quietly, Patrick," said Mayfield, in a low tone. "Don't provoke the villain; he will receive his true deserts by and by."

Toward nightfall, during which time the weather had somewhat cleared, they reached a stretch of prairie, across which they traveled, and, under the skillful pilotage of the hunter, reached the mountains, from which they could descend by a secret path into the village. The mountains had to be scaled for some distance. This was accomplished, and then Red-Feather, who was acquainted with every foot of ground, led them down through a ravine till they reached the mouth of the valley, with the whole Sioux encampment spread before them.

"By the powers, and where's Misther Margo?" exclaimed Pat, in a tone of astonishment. The rest looked round, and for the first time, noticed his absence. He had gone as he had come, without so much as "by your leave, sir."

"Faix, and it's good riddance of moighty bad rubbish," added Pat.

"However undesirable his company," said the hunter, "it is a misfortune that he has escaped us; for by his means, our plans may fail."

"Well, Red-Feather," said Mayfield, with an impatience he could not conceal, "what plan do you propose now, for we know not what schemes of deviltry may be going on in yonder camp."

"The only method by which Adele can now be saved, will be for one of us to make our way into the Indian camp, gain an interview with her and prepare her for escape, while the rest remain here, in readiness for further developments."

"And for whom would it be more proper to go than myself?" replied Mayfield, quickly. "I will reconnoiter the village; get a glimpse of Wi-je-gogh, and with his aid, get Adele to this ravine. If we are discovered, be prepared to dash in, and surprise the red villains."

"Your wish shall be obeyed," was the hunter's reply.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOUNTAIN CHASE.

MAYFIELD had not gone far when he heard the sound of footsteps. Crouching in the bushes, he grasped his rifle, and waited. Soon an Indian's form stood revealed against the dark background of the mountains. Scarcely had he shown himself, when Mayfield discovered that it was no other than Wi-je-gogh. He therefore made a sign, when the warrior bounded forward, and grasped his hand; but to Mayfield's astonishment, wrenched his rifle out of his grasp, and turned his own upon him, exclaiming, in broken English:

"Pale-face captive, now; go before Wi-je-gogh; quick, quick; or Wi-je-gogh shoot."

"Look here, old fellow," exclaimed Mayfield, somewhat nonplused, "that's a surly way to welcome an old acquaintance; you are joking."

But the Indian appeared quite in earnest and pushed him along. Mentally grumbling at the treachery displayed, Mayfield plunged into the thicket, followed by the Dacotah. After they had gone some distance, the Indian stopped, broke into a laugh, handed Mayfield his gun,

and pointing through the bushes, told him to look. Following this order, the young man saw pass directly over the spot where, but a moment before, he had been crouching, some half-dozen warriors. He turned a look of inquiry upon the Indian, who stood with folded arms regarding him.

"Pale-face pretty near cotched; Wi-je-gogh saw dat; had no time to tell; had to take um prisoner himself; ugh!"

Roger saw in a moment the strategy of the warrior.

"Give me your hand," exclaimed Roger; "there is some good in a Sioux yet. But see here, Wi-je-gogh, how does your queen come on? What has Wijunjou done?"

"Ab, berry bad," said Wi-je-gogh, shaking his head. "Wijunjou make order this morning that Silver-Tongue be his squaw; been a big dance all de day. Wijunjou be king, be chief now; take Silver-Tongue for squaw next day. Silver-Tongue cry much; hab great trouble; Wijunjou laugh; keep her guard; Wi-je-gogh was for help her off to night; help pale-face now. Got any more pale-face in mountains?" he added, suddenly.

"Yes, plenty; but I want you to help me get to the queen's tent when it gets right dark; then we will take to the mountains. Can't you get a horse for her?"

"Berry good; Wi-je-gogh get horse. When he come back?"

"Well," answered Roger, "you had better tell Silver-Tongue that we are near. It will be dark in an hour; have the horse ready at the north of the ravine; then come and take me to the tent. We will endeavor to put the queen out of Wijunjou's reach."

"Berry good," and with a guttural "ugh" of satisfaction, the warrior disappeared.

With difficulty the young man restrained his impatience, and by his movements threatened discovery. A warrior would pass by sometimes close to where he lay. A cascade near at hand could be heard rippling down the mountain-side, while the owl, from its covert in some lone tree, mingled its voice in chorus to the distant howl of the wolf. The hour at length wore away, and he heard a low whistle. Wi-je-gogh emerged from the gloom.

"Wi-je-gogh ready—horse ready—Silver-Tongue be ready soon."

"All right," he answered, and in a few moments scrambled below to find the horse, a fine animal, waiting in the defile. Without delay the Indian commenced an advance.

"Silver-Tongue tent changed," said Wi-je-gogh, after they had gone some distance. "Wijunjou put her in oder house close to de woods."

"Ah, that's very good; I am mightily obliged to Wijunjou; it will aid us. The night is favorable to us, at least."

Several times the approaching form of an Indian would cause them to conceal themselves in the shadows of the lodges. In a few moments they were before the lodge wherein the unhappy queen was confined. The outlines of the guards could be seen passing before it. Both stopped, for during Wi-je-gogh's absence the guard had been doubled.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Wi-je-gogh. "Pale-face wait; Wi-je-gogh must make way for queen."

Dropping upon his knees, and carrying his knife between his teeth, he reached the tent. Waiting for the guard to pass, he arose from his crouching position, and with his knife, cut the tightly-drawn skins of which the habitation was made, and glided through.

All this was visible to Mayfield, from the position which he occupied, outside the line of shadows cast by the building. Presently he saw two figures emerge, and his heart trembled with apprehension, for he saw the guard returning down his accustomed beat. He felt like shouting to Wi-je-gogh of his danger, but his fears were soon calmed, for the inattentive guard passed them as they lay concealed within the shadows of the lodges. Then he saw the two figures emerge from the gloom again, and come rapidly across the intervening space. The next moment Adele was clasped in his arms.

"Adele, dearest, God be thanked!"

A low cry of joy was her answer, and the next moment they were hurrying toward the mountains.

"How did you ever get here, Roger?" was the first question.

He told her all, and added, like a jealous lover that he was:

"Tell me, dear, did you think of me while absent?"

"Oh," she replied, in perfect simplicity, "how could I ever forget you?"

The spot where the horse was tied was reached. Adele vaulted lightly upon his back, and, with the good Dacotah brave for a guide, they took their way up the ravine, and soon reached the rest of the party. Red-Feather stepped forward and shook hands with Adele, saying:

"God be praised, my young friend, that you are safe out of the hands of the savages. Place your reliance in me, and I am sure we will soon be friends."

"What Roger has told me, sir, of you," she replied, with feeling, "has caused me to give you my entire confidence. "But Wi-je-gogh," she continued, "where are you going?"

"Wi-je-gogh," answered the Indian, "go back to his lodge; mourn for the Silver-Tongue of his heart, the song-bird of his bosom. Wi-je-gogh can not leave his nation; he is a Dacotah, and must fight for the lodges of his people. Go! Turn toward the rising sun, or Wijunjou be quick on trail. Hark! the white dove's escape is known!"

A shout was borne upon the air. The Indian turned upon his heel; hesitated a moment; then came up to Adele; took her hand in his, placed it upon his heart, pressed it to his lips slightly, wheeled suddenly, and disappeared in the path below. Yells rose upon the air; by-the-by, lights were seen moving uneasily to and fro, then the tramp of steeds could be plainly heard.

"If we would leave these mountains in safety," said the hunter, mounting his steed, "it is necessary to move immediately."

Scarcely were they in motion when the crack of a rifle awoke the echoes of the place, and a bullet whizzed over their heads.

"Faith, and that be's the music to dance by," shouted Pat, gleefully.

"Stop your waggin' tongue, Irishman," interposed Bogard, "or mayhap that same music will make yer sing out o' the other side o' yer mouth."

The shouts of the pursuers echoed nearer, and it was evident that the whole village was aroused.

A cold wind whistled through the half-leafless pines, with which the place was dotted. Mayfield, solicitous for Adele, transferred his blanket from his own shoulders to hers; and with tender care wrapped it round her slender form.

"Ah! Roger," she exclaimed, "Wijunjou is upon us—look! look!"

As he gazed back, he beheld the shadowy outlines of some horsemen, coming at a rapid trot, along a slight level.

"Gee up, Dobbin," shouted Patrick to his beast. "Pick up your feet like a man, and don't be afraid of hurtin' the ground ye tramp on; or, sure, and the haythen will be makin' bad luck till your rider."

"Mayfield," said Red-Feather, drawing his horse up by the side of the path, "do you ride on with Adele. We will act as your rear-guard. It will be improper to expose her to the risk of a stray shot."

For full a mile the path held nearly level across the top of the mountains. A dark ride it was. At the end was an abrupt angle, where the path broke off to the left. Across this commenced the race for life. The savages were mounted on fresh steeds; our friends on jaded ones; the race, then, was unequal.

Red-Feather, perceiving that it would be hopeless to outride their pursuers, halted his two companions. Concealed in the rocks, he made dispositions to receive the foe, while Mayfield and his charge sped on. The animal Adele rode was a lithe, powerful mustang, and bounded freely away.

Soon their ears were startled by the report of fire-arms, the yells of the foe, and answering shouts of the white men. Turning to Adele, Roger was about to address something to her, when her now thoroughly excited and half-tamed steed sprung from the path, over against the edge of the precipice. By his sudden bound he threw his fair burden from his back. Frantically she clutched at a small sapling that grew from the bank. With a cry of horror, Mayfield sprung from his horse, but fell sprawling to the earth. Recovering himself, he scrambled over the rocks, where Adele called to him to save her. He found it impossible to move her from her position. With a crash, the sapling gave way, but a large boulder prevented them from falling further. Catching the young girl in his arms, he grasped another young tree that leaned over the chasm. Soon the horrible thought took possession of him, that their combined weight was slowly, but surely, unearthing this sapling from its position. The small stones under their feet commenced rolling, and their sound was heard down the sides of the ravine. Clasp ing Adele closer in his arms, Roger thus breathed the story of his love:

"Here, with death before us, Adele, tell me that my love is all returned."

"All, Roger," was the answer. "I shall die happy in your arms."

The noise of the conflict died away, and Mayfield heard the sound of horses' feet approaching. In the hopes of making himself heard, he shouted till the woods echoed again; but no answer came; and, having halloed till he could no longer make himself heard, he gave over thoughts of rescue. The tree had been slowly moving. Great clods of earth and stones rushed from around and beneath them, when, suddenly, the sound of voices broke on his ear. He attempted to shout, but his voice failed him. Oh, the despair of that moment! The next instant he felt something strike him in the face and a voice shouted from above:

"Grasp the lasso! Hold fast, but a moment! We will let you down to the lower ledge!"

Mayfield grasped the thong which had struck him in the face with his right hand, now nerveless for superhuman exertion. With his left he maintained his hold upon Adele, who had swooned entirely away. In a moment, he felt himself descending. Another moment, and they were safe upon a broad ledge of rocks, a few feet below. Scarcely had they touched, when the well-known voice of Red-Feather was heard, and in a few moments he was at their side.

"God be praised!" was his first exclamation; "God be praised, that you are saved," and the strong man was deeply moved.

With a cry, Adele awoke to consciousness, but smiled her happiness in beholding her safety, and Red-Feather at her side.

Soon the voices of Bogard and Pat were heard, and presently they reached the ledge upon which all were standing.

"Och hone," exclaimed Pat, "and sure, and it's a haythen counthry, anyhow. Faith, and didn't I come widin an inch of buttin' me head off against the rocks that stuck out right forinist me. But, sure, and how's the Silver Lips? Be me sowl, and I thought both Misther Mayfield and his swateheart had lift, as slick as a rocket, to be sure."

"Ef this yer old boy's words are worth anything," said Bogard, "then we'll be leavin' these parts as fast as boss-flesh kin carry us, seein' as how some of the red-skins got back to the village, and will be more likely to come this way ag'in with a hull crew on 'em, to see what's the row."

"True, Bogard," replied the hunter; "your advice should be acted upon at once."

In a few moments they reached the upper path, where all their animals were secured. Mayfield would not trust Adele to ride her restive beast, and determined, in spite of her remonstrances, to carry her in his arms, until they had descended the mountains. Red-Feather, after a half-hour's ride, turned off into the woods to the right, and caused a halt in one of the defiles of the mountain, where the rocks afforded them protection from the sweeping blasts. As he dismounted, he said to Mayfield:

"It is evident the Dacotahs have ceased pursuit; and, as they know that Bogard and I are of the party, I think we are safe from attack

for the rest of the night. I have determined to halt for the present, and, with the morning's dawn, to wend our way on again."

Preparations were therefore made for a night's rest. With Mayfield's help, and by means of furs, which Wi je-gogh had thoughtfully placed upon her horse, the hunter succeeded in arranging a comfortable couch for Adele's repose.

In an hour's time all were asleep, save Red-Feather, who sat in the midst of the camp, his rifle thrown in his lap, and his head bowed upon his hands. Occasionally, he would arise, take two or three strides toward Adele's rock, then return, murmuring, as if conversing with himself:

"Would to God it were so! Yet, Providence seems against me. Oh, that villain! Could I but meet him once for all, and alone, I would demand just retribution for all that I have suffered. And the sainted Isabel! Were the stories whispered in my ear but lies? Good God, and did my cruelty kill her? Does she still live? Was I unjust? Could I overlook all, with such proofs staring me in the face? Ah, villain, serpent, destroyer! How I could strangle thee. This Adele—this queen, who is she? Ah, my heart scarce dares to answer. It is evident that this Mayfield loves her; and she him. But, away! specters of the past. All this is buried long ago—buried in the heart, which is sometimes the deepest burial-ground a man can find!"

He arose, and walked back and forth. The winds blew the gray locks about his face; and that face looked ghastly, even in that dim place.

CHAPTER X.

A LEAF FROM A LIFE HISTORY.

WITH the first flush of dawn the hunter roused the little camp.

To Mayfield he said, "Arise, and if you wish to behold one of the most beautiful sights your eyes ever rested upon, bring Adele with you, as I see that she is already abroad. We will stand on yonder topmost rocks, and view the rising sun!"

The long, gray streaks of the mornning, heralds of the approaching day, began to stretch themselves along the eastern horizon, dispelling the night shadows. Presently the whole country was spread out before them, with its broad prairies, its running rivers, and wooded dells. Now, following in the ranks of these grayer tints, came delicate pencilings of orange, deepening into brightest golden, until soon the god of day uprose to flood the earth with his glory.

The party admired the magnificent scene—worth even the hazards of peril and suffering to behold; and with better views of the beauty of the world about them, returned to their camp. A hasty meal was partaken of; the animals brought in, and then their long journey to the east was begun.

Red-Feather seemed absorbed in the deepest thought. Ever and anon he would cast his eyes back, give a scrutiny of the deepest intensity at Adele, then, seemingly dissatisfied, would draw his eyes away, but to return them again, only to be again disappointed.

Pat and Bogard, still at loggerheads, kept up a continual argument. No sooner would one begin a subject than the other, from principle, would find that he was directly opposed to it. Bogard was trying to convince his opponent that he knew nothing of the West, nor of the Indians.

"Ye son of an Irishman!" he exclaimed, indignantly, "that pretends to know as much as a trapper like myself, who have hunted and set traps afore ye smelt powder or knowed which end to load with it. Them crooked arms o' yourn wa'n't made fur fight, nohow. You never to a scalp from an Injin's head, or chased a buffler!"

"Faith, man, and ye kin talk," replied Pat; "sure, and it be's not surprisin' in the least, that ye are a good hand at takin' scalps. Be the powers, and you're a red-head yourself; and what's more like a red-skin than a red-head? Gintlemen, loike meself, don't do sich dirty work. Be me sowl, man, ye kin tell the truth, when ye say I niver was in a buffler chase. By St. Pathrick, and I'd not be doin' as the loikes of yoursif does, ye spalpeen. I'd kill the anny-mile, and not be afther chasin' it, wild me horse's tail a-flyin' in its eyes. Hout, Bandy-legs, and look well that ye don't hook 'em in the tree-top, and hang there. Faith, and ye'd sit fire to the forest around ye."

"Hist, paddy!" replied Bogard, losing control of himself, under the Irishman's pointed sallies. "Ye can't talk that way to the respectable son of Pennsylvania parents; I've let daylight through bigger fools than ye be, for less talk than that."

"Hout, man, ye knows but little of what ye says; and I'll bet me two eyes ye wouldn't hurt an ould friend. Come, shake hands wid an Irishman that'll niver turn his back on your bandy-legs, axin' your pardon for callin' ye that same. Give us a tight grip!" and the two shook hands for the ninety-ninth time.

They descended from the mountain, and entered upon the plain.

"Look yonder," said Red-Feather, pointing with his fingers. "Do you see yon small streak of silver, and near it a clump of cottonwood? We will rest there before night. The distance is deceitful, for it is yet a full two hours' gallop away."

"Who are those I see yonder?" inquired Adele, pointing towards the little copse upon the other side. "I saw several figures flit by, as if to conceal themselves."

Mayfield rode up to Red-Feather, and mentioned what Adele had said.

"She is right," said the hunter. "I have kept my eyes upon yon copse for the last half-mile. I saw figures pass and repass through it. Do you know who they are?"

"I can guess."

"It is Ralph Margo; and, if these eyes of mine be not deceived, those Free Trappers whom we met yesterday are all there with him."

"What do you propose, then? It will not do to expose Adele to the fury of the villains!"

"No!" said the hunter; "she must not be imperiled. We will break off to the right, and conceal ourselves in those thickets. You at least

will do so. For my part, if it prove to be him, there is a terrible settlement to be had between us!"

Their route was changed, but, as they turned from crossing the stream, and headed for the wood below, Margo and some half-dozen of his followers dashed from the cottonwood, and ranged themselves upon the opposite bank.

"Ho!" he shouted, "Red-Feather, are you afraid to cross this stream? Come, lads," addressing his own men, "we will go after them, seeing that there is a pretty lady in the case." With a clatter and splash, the Bandits of the Plain swept into the shallow river and reached the side occupied by the hunter and his party. But the latter had obtained the start, and a short gallop, at full speed, sufficed to conceal them in the lower copse, where their cover was too secure to warrant the approach of any enemy.

Finding himself baffled, Margo advanced some distance alone, then dismounting he called out to the hunter:

"Come forth, Red-Feather, and I will here give you the satisfaction you have demanded; neither party to interfere in the contest. Come forth, if ye be not a coward! Come quickly, or I'll expose your true character to that girl crouching there, and to those around you. Ha, afraid?"

"No, villain, not afraid!" and Red Feather stepped forward to meet the bold challenger.

"I come, in answer to your call. I am ready to fight you, chief of outlaws, and prince of villains, that I now know you to be!"

"You honor me, indeed!" was the sneering rejoinder.

Both slung their rifles, and each drew his glittering blade. Red-Feather seemed to be completely overmastered with his emotion. Margo was cool, and self-reliant, standing upon the defensive. He had not long to wait, for, with the vehemence of a maddened lion, Red-Feather rushed upon him, and delivered a blow, which, had it struck the destined point, would forever have silenced the outlaw. But with a quick turn of his own weapon at the wrist the blow glided harmlessly off, and the outlaw, in return, inflicted a scratch upon the hunter's shoulder. Mayfield viewed this with alarm; for the manner in which Red-Feather was fighting would soon give the victory to his opponent.

"By the tails o' beavers!" growled Bogard, the trapper, "the colonel has got his mad up, and can't work straight. Boys, jist get yer irons ready, fur I rayther guess we shall have tew use 'em. Be steady, and fire when I does."

"Faith, and it's Mither Red-Feather will be afther firin' 'im sure," said Pat, confidently; and, indeed, the hunter seemed to appreciate the advantage which Margo was gaining over him. Setting himself more firmly in his position, he awaited the attack of his adversary, who, becoming elated with the prospect of easy success, where he had expected great resistance, began to press the hunter closely. The old look of determination came into his face again; and for full five minutes, blade rung against blade, without either side gaining any perceptible advantage, when suddenly, Red-Feather made a feint, and receiving the anticipated blow upon the blade of his weapon, made a quick lunge,

burying it in the bandit's body, just below the shoulder. With a howl of rage and pain, Margo freed himself from the knife, and before the hunter could understand his motions, unslung his rifle, and discharged it at him. Fortunately, the missile sped wide of its mark.

This was a signal for the opening of general hostilities. With loud shouts the outlaws bore down upon the hunter. Bogard's vigilance was not lacking, for a volley from the copse laid three of them upon the earth, and out the three companions of Red Feather dashed, and the conflict became hand to hand. But it was of short duration, for Margo's party turned, and fled toward the mountains, leaving their leader upon the greensward.

"My time is come!" he exclaimed. "Help me, Red-Feather, to yon fallen tree, and I will tell you all before I die."

The hunter bore him, leaning on his arm, to the designated spot, and sat down beside him.

"Tell me," he exclaimed, vehemently. "Tell me, is Isabel no more?"

"She died three years ago in St. Louis—"

"Died!" exclaimed Red-Feather. "Oh, heavens! is it so?" and he buried his head in his hands. "George, tell me—how—how she died!" and the hunter gazed at the dying man, till his glances seemed to pierce him.

"She died," he answered, in a broken voice, "as she had lived—pure and innocent, and blessing you with her latest breath!"

"Tell me, man, tell me, is this true?" and he laid his hand upon Margo's breast. "Is it true that your vile schemes failed? Is it true, that through all these long years of suffering she still was true to me—that I have been fatally deceived, or, do I still talk to a fiend incarnate?"

"No, no," murmured the dying man, "I am too near eternity to deceive you now. True, I have acted like a fiend toward you; the stories that were carried to your ears were false, basely false, and I was their author. That fatal letter I wrote and sent. A story was brought to her of your desertion. She went to St. Louis, joined her sister's family. No, man, I have played you a hard game; but *she* was never false; forgive me, ere I die."

"Forgive you," said the hunter, hoarsely. "Forgive you, while *her* wrongs are ringing in my ears, and my own wrongs gnawing at existence itself? Forgive such a monster as you! Away, mercy, I know ye not! Tell me," he added, more fiercely, "tell me of the child; tell me, for the love of Heaven; leave not that undone."

"God have mercy," cried the dying wretch; "must I die with all this load of guilt upon my soul; can I meet *her* before the judgment bar? Mercy, mercy! Oh, Red-Feather, pray for me, even as you were prayed for by her!"

The hunter's heart was visibly touched. He dropped upon his knees, and poured forth a heartfelt prayer, beseeching God's pardon for this guilty, dying sinner, and then asked pardon for himself, for being the cause of the wretched man's death.

"I know revenge belongeth unto the Lord," he said, "and pardon me, Margo—I will call you such still—even as I pardon you."

"I do, I do," replied the dying man; "the girl

—still—” a rattle as he choked with the blood that filled his throat.

“Speak!” shouted the hunter, in the very agony of despair, as he bent over the form of his foe. “Oh, I conjure you, leave me not in doubt of that.”

“The girl—after I saw—St. Louis—plains—mercy,” and with a groan, the wretched man fell backward, dead.

“Merciful Heaven!” exclaimed Red-Feather, “dead, and his secret unrevealed! Does the phantom fly before me? Will the problem never be solved? Oh, heavenly Father, calm my soul, for I am but human, still.”

He arose, and walked toward his companions. To Bogard he said:

“The body of that man must be buried. Come, help me.”

When the body had been consigned to its last resting-place, all mounted and wended their way over the broad savannas that stretched for miles upon either side. They had been on their journey some time, when their attention was arrested by the voice of the Irishman:

“Be me faith, and may me two eyes turn into one, if it ain’t been snowin’, sure, and it’s purty weather it is, and a mighty quare counthry in the bargain.”

“Haw! haw!” laughed Bogard, derisively, “that proves how much an Irishman knows. Call that snow? That ar’s the salt-medders, whar bufflers feed. Haw! haw! you are cute on the buffler question.”

“Quite a mistake, Patrick,” said Red-Feather, smiling. “Those are, indeed the salt meadows,” and turning to Mayfield, continued: “This part of the country abounds in small saline springs, that, at certain seasons of the year, rise and overflow, leaving a hard incrustation of salt along their courses, which thousands of buffaloes congregate to lick up. If I am not much mistaken, there is a herd, now.”

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated. Below them, a mile, perhaps, were herded an immense number of these animals, their brown, shaggy forms standing out in strong contrast to the white ground around them.

“Look here, Red-Feather,” said Mayfield. “I met but one herd of this kind, before, and that, as you know, was under circumstances none of the most auspicious. But, as our larder is empty, and my lungs feel the need of a bracing, what say you to a canter among those grizzly fellows?”

“With all my heart,” answered the hunter; “but, first, we shall have to make a *detour* to the southward, not to have the wind with us, for, should they ‘scent,’ we may have a chase for our pains.”

“Come on, Irishman,” shouted Bogard. “Now’s yer chance to show what yer kin do alongside of a jenawine hunter, who’s follered the business ever since bufflers was. Come on, I repeats to ye, and look out fur yourself that some o’ them annymiles don’t take a notion to gore you and yer boss. Sich things as them happen o’ times, leastwise when a feller’s a greenhorn, as you be.”

“Odds, man,” answered Pat, “sure and it’s meeself that ain’t afeard of bufflers, nor of

bandylegs, the same. Kape yoursilf well in hand, or it’s a Mulloney wull outdo ye the day.”

Little to the west, was a small elevation, where they left Adele, while they descended a sort of valley, which is often met with in the plains, and cautiously approached the game. Red-Feather led the way, and each selecting his own, made a dash into the throng. It was worth while now to watch the maneuvers of the hunters. With a loud shout the Irishman dashed helter-skelter into the midst of the multitude. Soon they started, with loud bellowing, from their choice pasturage, and away they went, with headlong fury, across the prairie. Red-Feather and Bogard, with the greatest ease, entered the herd, and each succeeded in separating a fine calf, and were now fast closing in upon their prey. Bogard had brought his down; but Mayfield and his companion were not so successful. Pat, determining to show Bogard what he could do, made a tremendous onslaught on a huge beast which came snorting by him; but, to his surprise, the animal, which had been wounded by Mayfield, turned fiercely upon him, causing his horse to rear suddenly upon his haunches, precipitating the rider sprawling upon the earth. With a snort of terror the horse dashed away over the plains, while the buffalo stopped before the prostrate form of the Irishman, as if about to paw him, in revenge for the wound he was suffering.

“For the love of Heaven!” he shouted, in pitiful yet vigorous tones. “Howly Virgin protiect me! Shoot, Misther Mayfield, shoot, or I’m a dead man it is. Och, ye spalpeen,” he added to the buffalo, and attempting to extricate himself from his predicament, “ye ugly ould varmint, and ye be starin’ of me wid eyes loike the gintleman in black, bedad!”

But a ball from Bogard’s rifle entered the beast, just in time to save Mulloney from a sad fate.

“Much obleeged to ye, Fatty,” shouted Pat, joyfully.

“Ye needn’t be,” growled Bogard; “ought by rights to have let the annymile gored ye, ye loose-tongued, crooked-armed Irishman. That comes o’ ye lettin’ on to know as much as a respectable individdle what knows a few things.”

But Mulloney was off after his horse. Mayfield succeeded little better than his servant. He had attacked one of the shaggy monsters, but, as we have seen, only wounded him. The second one which he attacked ran roaring across the plain. On after him dashed Mayfield, using every exertion to come up with the bellowing beast, but he was doomed to disappointment in the moment when his expectations were at the highest; for the object of his pursuit turned upon him, causing his steed to come to a very decided halt, having the effect of pitching Roger over his head, almost beneath the feet of the enraged beast. But, with a snort of terror, it again turned, and by the time the young hunter had gathered himself up from the promiscuous heap into which he had been thrown, the game was bounding madly away, in concert with the whole herd.

Shaking the dirt from his clothes, Mayfield

secured his horse, who had patiently awaited him.

"Well, that beats me out," he laughed. "Here am I, considered to be a first-rate horseman, landed over the head of my steed, scarcely knowing as yet whether my neck is broken, or whether I am on the buffalo's back."

When he came up, he was greeted with a loud guffaw from Patrick, who had succeeded in regaining his own horse.

"Bedad, Misther Mayfield, but ye be making a mighty purty tumble off of your horse's head. Sure, and I thought ye was jumpin' to the moon, on a flyin' visit, afther buffaloes."

"Haw! haw! captain," laughed Bogard, "yer wuss nor the Irishman hyer."

"You must have intended taking a ride on yon buffalo's back, my friend. If so, you made a capital leap," and the hunter smiled, quietly.

"All right, lads," laughed Mayfield, "you have it all your own way, but, bless my soul, I'm mighty thankful that my head is not sticking in the ground. It was about as rapid circumlocution as I ever went through. But what have you got?"

"Two fine bufler calves, with enough o' meat on 'em to make a hungry Christian's mouth feel good for a month o' Sundays." And Bogard looked admiringly at their proportions.

In a few moments the animals were skinned and quartered. Portions needed for future use were cut and seasoned with the salt, and slung on the packs. Then the party rejoined Adele, who had witnessed the sport.

"Let us press forward again," said Red-Feather, "and to-night we will pass the creek, which will place us within two days' journey of the post."

The country they were passing over was undulating table-land; the wide sea of waving grass extended for miles upon either side; little streams ran across their path; occasionally, they would pass the carcass of some bison that had been slain by other hunters; the remains of a feast, or a camp, that indicated the spot where some emigrant party had made their sojourn, was pointed out. About sundown they drew near to the North Fork.

"Yonder, in that small copse of cottonwood," said Red-Feather, "is where we will camp for the night. By the way, there is a story connected with that cottonwood, which, should you like to hear it, I will relate. A story in which I play a conspicuous part."

"Just the thing, Red-Feather," said Mayfield. They reached the little stream, plashed through it, and entered the copse referred to. A fire was built, and a haunch of buffalo-meat given to Bogard, who soaked it slightly and roasted it on a spit.

Our friends set themselves down to the repast and attacked the viands spread before them with relish. The clear running stream afforded them excellent water. After the meal had been finished, the horses fed and picketed for the night, and another dry branch thrown on the fire, Red-Feather, with his back against a tall tree, his rifle upon his lap, began his promised recital.

CHAPTER XL

RED-FEATHER'S STORY.

"ONE burning day in summer, I rode across this plain. The animal I rode fell into a slow, lazy walk; my thoughts took wings to themselves, and I became oblivious to things around me; when suddenly I was aroused by a shrill whoop. I reined in and unslung my rifle. A short distance in front, a body of twenty or thirty warriors were drawn up in lines fronting each other, with weapons poised. Between them, bound on the back of a jet-black horse, was a white man. With wonder I gazed upon this strange spectacle. I had not long to wait, for, in answer to the first defiant yell, a savage from the opposite band shouted the war-cry of his nation. Immediately, a report echoed, till the place seemed full of rolling thunder. The wild yells of Blackfoot and Sioux, mingled in chorus with the crack of the rifle; and, for a time, the conflict presented a picture of terrible fierceness. Soon the contest became hand-to-hand; rifles were cast aside, and the tomahawk and knife commenced the work of death. A new turn was now taken in this singular affair, which, for a time, caused the union of both parties. The captive upon the horse gave vent to shrill cries of terror, as the steed flew across the plain toward this copse. With wild yells both parties started after him. My horse caught the excitement, and over the plain for life and death we rode; the outcries of the savages, as they dashed madly after, were answered by the shrill notes of terror from the captive horseman. My steed soon carried me ahead of all competitors. Now that I found myself distancing these savage riders, I determined to rescue the helpless captive. I shouted to him to keep quiet, that he might not terrify his horse, and, urging my own beast forward, soon came up with him; but the foe, divining my intention, let fly volleys after us, some of them making sharp music to my ears. A few bounds carried us into the shadow of the wood, and there I stopped the captive's horse. In a few moments I had unbound him."

The hunter's brow here expressed fierce passion, and, turning to Mayfield, he abruptly asked:

"Did you ever read the story of the 'Farmer and the Adder?' You understood the moral therein conveyed. No sooner was this man unbound and risen to his feet, than I recognized my bitterest enemy. Not a word, however, did I say to inflame his passions, or recall the past; nor did I cease my endeavors to help him repel the savage foe; but you will be surprised when I tell you that this man no sooner found himself free, than he drew from his belt a pistol that still remained, and, turning upon me, so bitter his hate, demanded my immediate surrender. Do you wonder that I was beside myself with rage? This man had caused me great wrong; he had poisoned the quiet that reigned in my home, and made me a lone wanderer in these savage wilds. Of course I refused his demand; but, in an instant, he mounted the animal, where a moment before he had been a prisoner, and dashed out to meet the advancing foe. With his

hand raised, and the palm extended toward them, he advertised his peaceful intentions.

"Immediately the whole party came to a halt; and I could see from my covert that all were engaged in earnest consultation. Suddenly the villain pointed his finger toward this copse, where I lay concealed. I could no longer doubt that he had purchased his own salvation at the price of my betrayal. All the little spark of human kindness that had been left in my breast was now extinguished by this exhibition of heartless depravity.

"With anxiety I crouched low in the bushes, and awaited the onset, well knowing that if I could succeed in picking off the foremost warrior, and perhaps the villain who was wont to betray me, I might gain time by the confusion to elude pursuit. With a yell, they made a simultaneous dash toward my concealment. My arm was steady, and I saw that two of the messengers of death had taken effect. One warrior had dropped from his horse, and my old enemy had fallen, not dead, as I had at first supposed, but wounded. For a moment they halted, as I expected would be the case, to decide what course to pursue; but another admonition from my rifle caused them to withdraw out of range.

"While I was wondering what would be the next act in this drama, my attention was arrested by the approach of horsemen from the direction of the mountains. As they neared, I discovered them to be white men, well mounted, and each carrying a short carbine in his hand. With loud shouts they charged upon the Indians, who had drawn up to receive them. In a moment's time the savages were sent scattering over the plain. The man who led the party dismounted, and approaching my enemy, lifted him in his arms, and set him on his horse again. A few words passed between them. I was not long in making up my mind that they were mountain outlaws, and he the leader. I felt convinced that my fate was fixed; and as death would be the alternative if captured, I might as well fight it out. All speculation, however, proved of no avail, for, while my attention was arrested by those in front, a couple of the villains succeeded in getting in my rear and in approaching me unobserved. Resistance was useless, and I surrendered myself into their keeping.

"I was placed upon my own horse, and bound in the same manner in which I had found my betrayer. I learned that he was a leader of Free Trappers, and had been captured by a party of Indians; a dispute had arisen over the possession of his person, and a fight had ensued. I was hurried to the mountains, and soon found that my persecutor had determined that I should die a horrible death—tortured at the stake!

"The place chosen for the deed was in a canyon of the mountains—a gloomy spot into which the sunlight of heaven seemed never to penetrate. Into this I was led, bound and guarded by some half-dozen of the villains, while my betrayer accompanied them to see that his demoniacal purposes were carried out. Rank grass grew there; streams of water took rise there, and flowed sullenly through its narrow length; the high rocks walled themselves

up around; from gloomy heights huge boulders frowned down upon me; and as I gazed from face to face, I could find no more sympathy in their stolid countenances than in the rugged rocks. They went noiselessly about the work; no sound was heard save the dripping of the waters, the sighing of the winds, or the occasional shriek of the eagle, as it flew from its eyrie in the mountain tops.

"I could scarce believe that the outlaw would carry his threats into execution—I thought it was done as an intimidation. But I was bound to a tree, and the fagots were systematically piled about me. I began to feel that hope had deserted me indeed. But I was too proud to appeal from my fate; the presence of my foe prevented that. He stood before me, watching the preparations, the personification of devilishness; his little black eyes almost concealed by the shaggy eyebrows and slouch hat that hung over them. Suddenly he turned upon me, and hurled forth his vituperation and abuse. Knowing my helplessness, he recounted the dark things of the past, and brought before my gaze all my years of woe. My brain seemed on fire; and as I gazed at him he seemed to have all the subtilty and malignity of the arch-fiend. I shuddered at the likeness.

"The torch was applied to the fagots, and I awaited the moment when the greedy flames should grapple with my body. I closed my eyes, and gave my thoughts to the Great Spirit, when suddenly I was aroused by a shriek which echoed down the mountain-side, and I beheld an apparition which thrilled me beyond measure. Flying down the mountain path I beheld the figure of a young girl, beautiful as a picture, her black hair flowing in the wind. She was dressed in a short, Indian robe, that fluttered like the wings of a bird, as she flew toward us.

"'Save him, oh, save him!' she cried, and with the bound of a gazelle she dashed past the astonished villains, scattered the brands, drew a short dagger which she wore in her girdle, and cut the thongs that bound me. Her form was one of the most queenly I ever beheld; but her eyes, as she glanced on the cowering men before her, and clutched the dagger, flashed forth the light of madness. Turning upon the leader, she exclaimed:

"'Is this your chosen spot of death? Is this what you do with your captives? Do you want somebody to burn? Ha! ha! Burn me; I am ready and waiting! You thought not that your mountain bride watched you—followed you like a shadow. They tell me I am mad,' she laughed, and, as she turned toward me, a smile wreathed her lips. 'Well, well; let them think so; I am an Indian Princess; that man came to the lodge of my father, wooed and won me. I gave him all the love I owned; he took it, trifled with it, and then spurned it. He was tired of me, ha! ha! He thinks I am mad. Away, away; no burning to-day, or I'll let the heart's blood out of ye. Away, away; your mad queen commands.'

"'Quietly, Leola,' replied the outlaw, 'quietly; this man is my prisoner; I will not have him burnt if you say not. Take him away, men. Go back to your own quarters, now, Leola; I command it.'

"'Hal hal' she laughed, with the cunning of insanity. 'You want me to go away so you can burn him. No, no; take him away now to Leola's quarters; Leola go with him.'

"Finding that she could not be pacified in any other way, the men surrounded me, and I was taken back and confined.

"I had not lain long upon my rough couch that night, before I heard the door open. The Indian girl, Leola, stood before me.

"'Come,' she said, 'the outlaw sleeps on the fumes of the spirit he has drank. Come, I will lead you away; I will have revenge; I will disappoint him of his prey!'

"I followed her out, and we made our way along the brow of the mountain, and reached a hold rock that hung far over its rugged sides. Here she gave me some instructions in regard to the path which I was to pursue, and placed in my hand my rifle and accouterments, which, by some means, she had obtained.

"'Go,' she exclaimed, in a warning voice, 'your horse is waiting in the defile below. Go. I am outwitting the outlaw. Hal hal the false scoundrel. Fly,' she almost shrieked; and, as I turned, a sharp report rung out upon the night air. Instantly, as I could see by the light of the rising moon, she threw her arms wildly about her head, made a plunge forward, and tottered over the precipice, giving utterance to an awful shriek, that seemed to freeze the marrow in my bones. The same moment the voice of my betrayer shouted for me to surrender: but I turned, darted down the side of the mountain, and reached the ravine in safety. There I found my steed: the animal knew me and neighed affectionately; I sprung upon his back, but found that I was not to escape thus easily. In a few moments, I discovered dark forms dashing down from a little canyon to the right of me, intending to reach the outlet of the defile, and bar my further progress. But my beast carried me through in safety, and by next morning's sun we were miles away over the prairie."

There was silence for a few moments after the hunter had finished, which was first broken by Adele, who listened with deep attention.

"And did you never know what became of the beautiful maniac and her false lover?"

A deep silence followed; then the hunter replied, slowly:

"The girl was undoubtedly killed, if not by the rifle-shot, certainly by a fall of several hundred feet. The villain who betrayed me and mine—who, for years, followed my every motion—who would have burned me at the stake, fell by my hand to-day, beside the stream almost in the same region where he, by treachery, would have sealed my fate. Ralph Margo and the betrayer were one and the same. Margo was an assumed name; his own shall not be revealed till the fullness of time makes all things fit."

"Bedad," exclaimed the Irishman, "sure and I knowed that it was the villain, when Mither Red-Feather was afther mention' of his two little eyes that had the same sarpints in 'em."

"Hold your tongue, you ill-mannered Pad-dy," growled his affectionate friend, Bogard, in

an undertone, "and learn to speak when you're spoken to."

"Bedad, and if it be that same ye mane to be kapin' quiet, faith and ye'd be savin' us all a good turn did ye mind the ould add'ge yourself, ye ugly Pennsylvany rover."

Preparations were made to repose for the night. Mayfield and Red-Feather, by taking their blankets and those of Pat and Bogard, succeeded in fitting up quite a comfortable tent for Adele's reception. In an hour's time all had sunk into repose save Red-Feather, who sat with his back against a tree, his arms folded, his eyes riveted upon the fast-fading embers of the fire. All that autumn night, with tumultuous life-recollections rushing upon his memory from the weird past, he kept his watch.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LOST FOUND.

THE next morning found the party making preparations for the start. It was one of those splendid mornings in October, when the air is clear and bracing, and the woods were vocal with the songs of birds, which still lingered in their summer haunts, as if loth to leave them.

"I tell you what it is, Red-Feather," said Mayfield, as he strapped his blanket upon his horse, "somehow or other I dislike to leave these regions for the 'States;' yet, when I think of Adele, I am perfectly content."

"Ah!" smiled the hunter, "I know the feeling. For years I have wandered in this Western country, and never have turned my back upon it that I did n't feel saddened at the thought of absence from it."

"Bogard," he added, turning to that worthy, "come, let us have everything ready, for we want to start without delay."

"All right, colonel," replied he. "I'll have everything squar' in a few moments, pervidin' this 'ere Dutch-built Irishman don't git in my road."

Of course this brought the Irishman to his feet, and as it was a gentle hint for him to be stirring himself, he commenced getting his things together.

"Och, ye lazy son of a Pennsylvany mither!" he exclaimed; "it's yerself that would be in the way, bunglin' matters. Hout, man, and if I intended any nice job to be sp'iled, I'd sind for you, that I would. Pat Mulloney kin dance a shindy at yer own dis'ase, or break a shillalah over yer sconce."

"Keerful, you jaw-full of brogue; and if it wa'n't for hurtin' yer ugly nose I'd give you a trapper's lesson in the art of fisticuff, and a little bufler-throwin' put in, by way of variety."

"Arrah! and is it that ye be tr'atin' off Faith, and it's your s'arvint that's forninst ye, ready to begin the operation. Be the powers, and Patrick Mulloney kin take the daylight out of any gr'asy son of a b'aver-hunter. Faith, mon, and ye'd better be lookin' for them same doms (dams), wid yer nose pokin' close to the ground."

Toward noon, as they were entering a copse of cottonwood, Red-Feather, who led the way, gave a low "Hist!" then, riding rapidly back,

exclaimed, dismounting from his steed and leading him into the underbrush:

"Dismount and conceal yourselves! A band of Blackfeet are coming this way. Quick, if you would save yourselves!" And scarcely had they ensconced themselves in the thicket when a loud tramping was heard in the opposite direction, and some twenty Blackfeet entered the open pathway in the forest. They were a fine set of men, and rode their horses with that ease and abandon so peculiar to the savage trained to the wild life of the plains. They were evidently out upon the trail.

Our friends crouched in the thickets, trembling lest their animals might betray them, but all passed through and disappeared upon the opposite side.

"Come, let us away from here with all speed," said the hunter. "For should they discover our trail out there on the prairie they will give us some trouble yet."

The party emerged again upon the plains and pressed rapidly forward.

It was amusing to listen to Pat and Bogard attempting to strike a bargain about returning to the trapping-grounds with Red-Feather and making "a good thing of it," as Bogard expressed it. Not even the threatened danger served to arrest their attention.

"Faith, no," was the Hibernian's answer. "No more will I come to this haythen country. If the blessed saints but git me wanst out o' it I'll niver be fool enough to trust meself in the company of a bandy-legged red-head again—niver again, bedad."

And yet Patrick didn't mean any such thing; and Bandy "argified" the points of the case for a further half-hour, evidently to Pat's satisfaction.

They halted for the night, within one day's end of their journey, and the following morning set out again, and toward the middle of the day hove in sight of the fort.

Several tribes from the north were encamped around it, and their tents, dotted here and there over the expanse, presented a pleasing and picturesque appearance.

For several days they remained at the fort. One afternoon, Red Feather called Mayfield aside, and told him that he must bid him good-by, as he was about to start for the trapping-grounds again.

"Never!" exclaimed Mayfield, impulsively. "Never go back. Come with me. I have a home and plenty; and, as long as I have a shelter over my head, Red-Feather need never want for a home and a friend."

A melancholy smile lighted up the hunter's countenance, as he replied:

"No. You don't know what you ask. I have a duty to perform, which I can not put aside. It is true, the object of my hopes seems to fly before me. Yonder comes the image of my lost one," he added, as Adele entered the room, now attired in a becoming chintz, which the good wife of the commandant had fitted up for her. Seeing herself the object of their attention, she would have left the room; but Red-Feather approached her, and said, while his voice trembled:

"Stay, Adele.—I will risk the disappointment," he muttered, and then said aloud:—"Listen to my story, and perhaps the mystery that overshadows my life may be unraveled by your hands."

Mayfield gave a wondering glance at Adele, but her eyes were fastened upon Red-Feather, with an intensity beyond description.

"Tell me, Adele," he went on; "tell me of the earlier portions of your life."

Adele placed herself by Red Feather's side, and related to him the story of her life.

For some moments Red-Feather remained silent; then, turning to Adele, said:

"And you have no recollection of your Christian name? Did you never hear it repeated?"

"No," she replied; "I never could remember. But here," she added, "is a locket, which I wear about me, containing the miniature portrait of a lady whom I presume to be my mother. The squaw who used to take care of me opened this occasionally, and let me look at it. Through her influence I was enabled to keep it. The secret of opening it she discovered, but never imparted to me. I was, at that time, too young to appreciate its value, and when she died, I was, of course, unable to use it, and not daring to show my treasure to any one around me, for fear that their cupidity might cause me the loss of it, I have never allowed the case to be looked upon by any one but myself."

As she spoke, she drew from her bosom an ivory locket, with no perceptible opening, and handed it to Red-Feather.

He clutched it; his whole frame trembled with excitement. Adele sprung forward, as the hunter touched a spring, and the locket flew open, presenting to view the portrait of a female evidently in the bloom of womanhood.

"Isabel! Isabel!" cried Red-Feather, and great tears coursed down his weather-beaten cheeks. "Oh, Isabel, do I behold your sainted face once more? God be thanked; the mystery is solved! Come, child," he said, turning to Adele, who was kneeling by his side. "Come, look upon this picture; does your heart whisper to you who it is?"

"My mother," she replied, through her tears.

"Your mother, true; and my wife."

"And you are then—" she exclaimed, starting up in wonder, and joy, and tears—not daring to finish the sentence syllabbling the new hope born in her soul; "you are my—"

"I am your father," and she was clasped to his breast, convulsively sobbing.

Mayfield stood in the background, viewing the scene, with surprise and joy written upon every feature.

"God be praised," he at length ejaculated, "that Adele has found a father. Even in this moment of joy for the recovery of the long-lost, I ask you, Red-Feather, for your daughter's hand."

"That, my dear sir," replied he, "you will have to settle with her. My own consent is freely given. You must know her, now, as Alice Gray. Red-Feather, also, passes away, and, in his place, please to become acquainted with plain William Gray."

"But, dear father," said Adele, "will you not

tell us all about your wrongs, and why it was you saw fit to lead a roving life upon these plains?"

"True," replied Red-Feather, "I must recount to you these things. It is your right to know them, and here you shall know all."

"Fifteen years ago I lived in the city of New York. Isabel Montalbert, my wife, was of Canadian extraction—a beautiful and noble woman. Allie, here—as we called her—was the bright connecting link between us. But the fairest Eden had its serpent; so my paradise, built with human hands, felt the sting of the poisonous monster. My business and profession was that of attorney. Finding it necessary to associate with me some one in the business, I decided upon one Walter Newhawl. When I first became acquainted with him he was my *beau ideal* of a man; yet there was one marked expression in his eyes which always caused me an uneasy sensation when I sometimes found his gaze directed upon me. Two months passed quietly away. One day I was sitting in my office when a letter, written in an unknown hand, was delivered to me by the postman. Opening it, I glanced at the signature, and discovered it to be anonymous. I commenced reading; but would to God I had never seen the accursed sheet. It told me of Newhawl's baseness, and assumed my own dishonor. With the heat of passion I crushed on my hat, and was leaving the office, when Newhawl entered the apartment. Showing him the letter I dared him to disprove what was therein written. Instead of answer he struck me a savage blow. I could stand no such insult, and, seizing a cudgel that lay in the room, I thrashed him till I thought life extinct; then rushed home, with the rage of a demon, and confronted Isabel. Telling her of the letter I had received she was startled, hesitated, then professed anew her love for me. Thinking her confusion an evidence of the truth of the accusation, I pushed her aside. She drew herself up, in mingled pride and beauty, and scathed, with burning indignation, the cowardly author of the lies. I returned to my office, and sought to crush out the pain I suffered. For days I remained away from the house. The story of Newhawl's thrashing, and the incidents connected therewith, had spread through the circle of our associates; and, like all bad gossip, it lost nothing by repetition. One evening I turned my steps toward home. As I crossed the threshold, Allie met me with tears in her eyes, asking for her mamma. With alarm, I sprung up-stairs. Her room was deserted—she was gone! For a moment I was struck dumb; to my excited and suspicious mind here was evidence against her; and when I found that Newhawl had left the same day, I gave up all as lost.

"For more than a year I plodded on; but I soon found myself journeying near the verge of ruin. I heard of a party of adventurers going to the West, and determined to join them. With Alice I went to St. Louis, from whence, accompanied by my child, I set forth on a tour of pleasure and exploration to some, but to me a tour to kill time and thought. We had not been out many days before our company was joined by several hunters, when, judge of my

surprise, to find among them Walter Newhawl, known to you by the name of Ralph Margo. Our interview was stormy. From his conversation I was led to believe that all I had heard was true. In hate we parted, swearing vengeance against each other. The next day—and, as I afterward found, through the instrumentality of Margo—we were attacked by Sioux Indians, and so complete was the surprise, that most of the party were either killed or captured. It proved, eventually, that the party which captured myself was entirely distinct from the one which captured Alice. I was hurried off, and subjected to the greatest persecutions. Finally, after numerous attempts, I succeeded in escaping from them.

"Wife and daughter both gone, I wandered aimless and alone.

"After years of wandering, I came across Bogard, whom I found engaged in conflict with a lot of Sioux. With his help I succeeded in driving them off; I was pleased with the man; a strong friendship sprung up between us, and has continued unabated to this day.

"I met Margo again; our meeting was deadly; you know the sequel. From him I received a fragmentary explanation of the wrongs he had inflicted upon me; I found that he had insulted my wife, and that she had spurned him with loathing. Maddened by his defeat, he laid a plan by which he might revenge himself upon her; he wrote the anonymous letter, which, to my shame and sorrow be it said, I permitted so to inflame my mind as to treat my wife with such suspicion and harshness as to drive her from our once happy home. She fled, I knew not whither. My inflamed mind said she had flown with Margo; and as he did suddenly disappear at the same time, I had no thought but her loss to me was irretrievable—that my dear child was motherless. It would appear from Margo's confession—for the scoundrel kept close watch over her steps—that she went to St. Louis, where, in the family of an old friend, she found a safe home. Knowing herself innocent, she could never consent to return to a husband who had so wronged her. She went away, mourning that she never should see her child more. For more than a year she tarried with her friend, and then God, in his goodness, removed her from her sorrows. She died in the belief that I had deserted her, for Margo, the heartless, kept her informed, or rather, misinformed, of my doings and purposes. Margo became the leader of a desperate gang of Free Trappers. For years he followed me like a shadow. Providence threw Mayfield across my path. Through his efforts, Alice, I was led to find in you a long-lost daughter. You will wonder why I did not make the discovery sooner. I had been so often deceived that I was afraid to broach the subject. Yet, I felt confident that there was some invisible link between us."

Red-Feather paused, and Alice, raising her eyes to his face, said, with a smile:

"You won't go back to the plains again, will you, father?" It sounded odd for the hunter to be called by that dear name. He replied:

"No, I have money enough with Mons. Pierre,

the commandant of the post, to keep us in comfort the rest of our lives."

"But hold here, Mr. Gray," broke in Mayfield; "I beg pardon, but I don't like this one-sided way of doing business. I tell you what it is, Alice, ahem! I shall get jealous after a bit, and go back to the mountains myself."

"I am not afraid of it at all, she replied, as she smiled archly at him.

"But, Red Feather," said Mayfield, "as for money, bless you, I have enough with my bankers in Boston to keep us all, and my plan now is—since the shape and shade of affairs have so altered—that we proceed from here to St. Louis, and thence take passage to Boston, where all minor details can be more easily arranged."

"Well," replied the hunter, "I must go and hunt up Bogard, and see what he will have to say."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CURTAIN DROPPED.

"HALLOO, thar, colonel, what's that you say? Goin' to leave us?"

This exclamation proceeded from Bogard, who, with the Irishman, on the morning succeeding the events narrated in the last chapter, was standing near one of the block-houses, listening to Red-Feather's account of the finding of his daughter, and his intention of going to the "States" with them.

"Be me sowl," ejaculated Pat, "and I knowed the Silvery Tongue was Misther Red-Feather's daather. Be me faith, and his gal is a jewel. Och hone, Misther Red-Feather, and it's Pathrick Mulloney that's gravin' 'cause yer l'avin', but bedad," he added, with a wink at Bogard, "I'd l'ave the best friend in the world, per-vidin' I might elope wid sich an angel."

"Shut up, you howlin' Irishman!" commanded Bogard; then to the hunter: "I say, colonel, and d'ye tell me you're not goin' back to the plains ag'in? and—and—what'll become of me? What'll this indiwiddle do?" And the rough but tender-hearted fellow dashed something like a tear away.

Red Feather was much affected; but recovering his self-possession, replied:

"I renew my offer to you, Bogard, to accompany me to the 'States.' As long as I have a shelter, you are welcome to share it."

"True, true, colonel, I knows you said it, but it can't be did. What would such a rough critter as me do, out there in the 'States,' whar all the pretty ladies and fine gentlemen be? No, no! I was growed on the border, and hev' followed Injin-shootin' and beaver-trappin' all my life, and reckon as how I'll git rubbed out in the harness. Moughty glad that you've found your darter, but, as fur me, now that we've crossed trails, why, I'm all alone, and as I was in that same fix afore we come'd together I reckon as how I kin go it ag'in."

"Arrah, now, Bandy-legs," broke in Pat, "sure and your memory be's dreadful short, whin ye talks about bein' alone and havin' no friends. Faith, and it's Pat Mulloney, mesil', that will stand by your red head till ye be dead, bedad, and the man is right foreninst ye the same, riddy for a stretch among the red nayers, bedad, until he finds his daater."

"Gi'n us a grip o' your pawr, Irishman," replied Bogard, attempting to conceal his emotion at this genuine display of friendship.

"Good, be me faith, Bandy! Why can't we two, right afore Misther Red-Feather, stroike up a bargain to get beavers an' buffaloes an' scalps foriver, to be sure. Sure, and Pat Mulloney it is that would like to pull the big-tailed mice the same whin he can make the matter o' a little siller."

"All right, Irishman; if you have pluck enough to stick to your bargain, why, then, in course, I'm agreed. We'll go pardners. I'll give you half of what we trap. What d'ye say, man, to the articles?"

"Howly Mither, sure and I'll say anything to that. Faith, and I'll go wid ye to the north pole, on an ice expedition—in ywhere at all, at all. Be the powers," he added, "here comes Misther Mayfield; a foine little man he be. Be gorrah, and I hate to be l'aving the gintlemon."

"What's that you say, Patrick?" observed Mayfield, as he came up.

"Why bliss your two purty eyes, Misther Mayfield, I was a-sayin' as how I hated the l'aving of yez."

"Leaving me, Patrick? Why, what's up, now? Haven't I been treating you well enough?"

"Faith, and it's the tr'atin' me too well it is, sure, Misther Mayfield; and I have taken the suddint notion to go back to the trappin'-grounds; and it's mesilf, as I said afore, that disloikes the l'aving of yez, and that swate crayther ye have in tow."

"Why, Patrick, I am truly sorry to hear this, for I was in hopes that you would continue with us; but, if you will go back, it shall not be empty-handed. Before we start this afternoon, I will get you a complete outfit."

"Bliss your own shadder; and it's mesilf that would loike to go wid Bandy-legs, and yoursilf at the same time. Be the powers, and I am strongly gravin'."

The party made preparations for departure. Mayfield engaged the services of several *voyageurs* to take them down the Missouri. The sunshine of an October evening lighted up the scene. Red Feather was at the landing, dressed in a more civilized suit. As the time drew near, Mayfield came out from the block-house, and walked with Adele to the heavy skiff, wherein all their little effects were placed. Bogard and Pat accompanied the hunter to the boat. To witness the emotion of these men at this parting, which was to be final, was truly affecting. Red-Feather grasped Bogard's hand, unable to say a word. At last he stepped into the boat, shook hands once more, and, for the last time, their eyes met, and both wept like children.

The Irishman's grief was of the most dolorous, exaggerated character, calling upon the saints to bless everybody, and to protect the dear people from the "haythens."

But all things must have an end, and the best of friends feel the pangs of parting. At last the word was given; the boat was shoved from shore; the boatman struck up a merry song, and its vibrations floated on the air, as swiftly

they glided along. The two men stood watching them from the bank, till the skiff turned a bend in the river and disappeared from sight.

They took up their journey to the trapping-grounds, without an hour's delay, and were often heard of along the frontier, sometimes as far west as the valleys beyond the mountains.

The Indians were seized with a wholesome dread of the wild Irishman, and hunters related odd anecdotes concerning the two trappers, who were always quarreling, yet seemed to be the best of friends.

Time—An October evening, three years later. Place—A handsomely furnished room, in one of the fine residences of Boston. Seated near a stand, engaged in braiding a small sack, was a personage in whose features the reader will recognize "*Adele, or Silver Tongue, the Pride of the Dakotahs.*" At her side, in a large arm-chair, was a man, whose head, sprinkled with the frosts of many winters, yet showing a frame of iron strength, will be recognized as *Red-Feather of the West*, while Mayfield held a curly-headed little daughter upon his knee—the perfect image of her mother.

Thus we leave them, enjoying the reward of their toils, and, with a profound bow, bid the reader adieu.

THE END.

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